The success –so far– of Clinton's high-stakes Haitian gamble suggests a subversive thought. Maybe Haiti is not the exception that proves the rule. Maybe Clinton's foreign policy is not an unmitigated disaster; or even a disaster at all... In fact, in terms of substance, the main policies followed by this administration have mostly been sound, or (since their ultimate outcome is yet unknown) at least reasonable and defensible.

In Defense of Clinton's Foreign Policy

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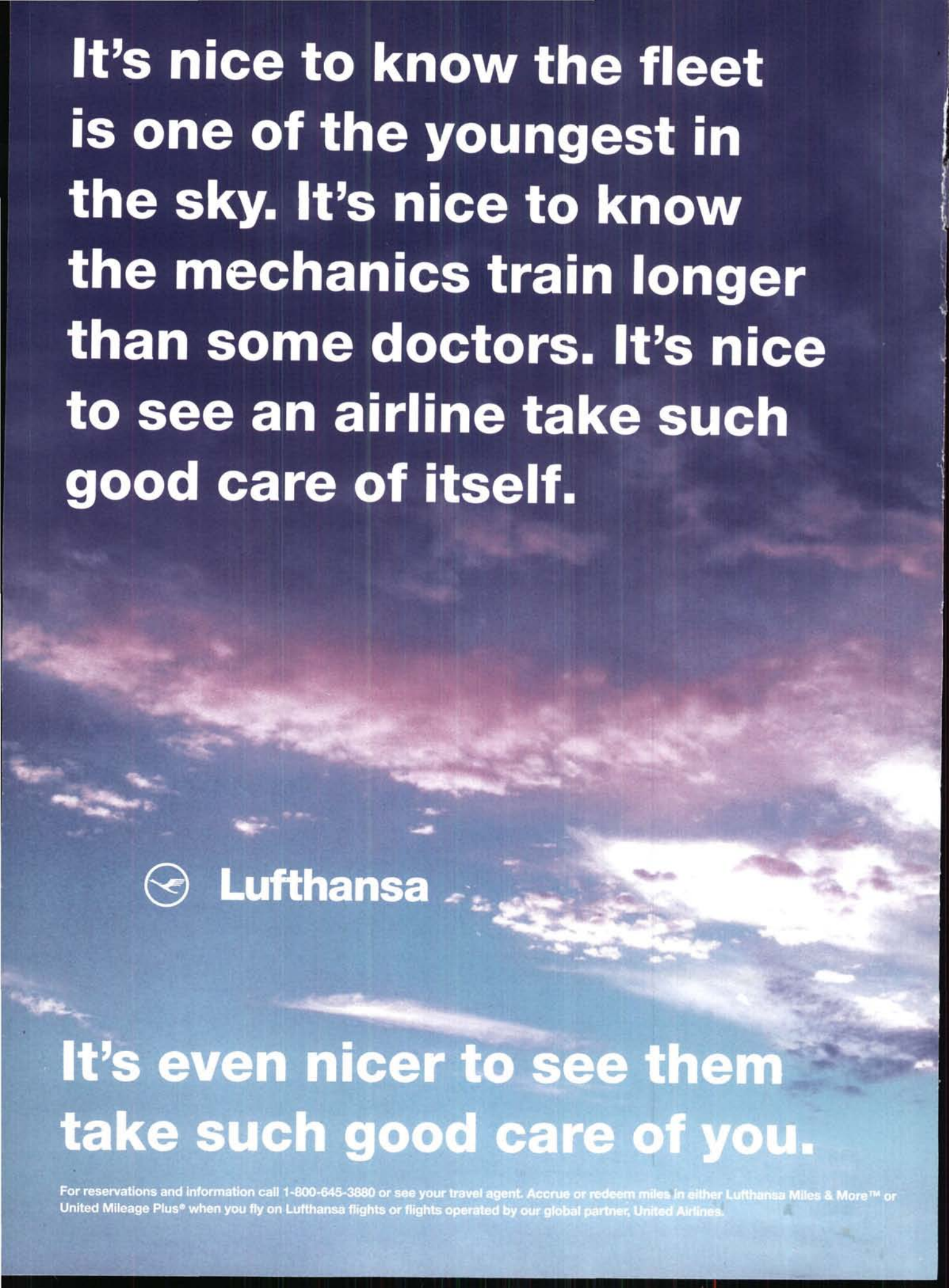
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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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OCTOBER 10, 1994

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The success—so far—of Clinton's high-stakes Haitian gamble suggests a subversive thought. Maybe Haiti is not the exception that proves the rule. Maybe Clinton's foreign policy is not an unmitigated disaster; or even a disaster at all... In fact, in terms of substance, the main policies followed by this administration have mostly been sound, or (since their ultimate outcome is yet unknown) at least reasonable and defensible.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Brock party

To the editors:

Charles Lane doth protest too much ("Brock Crock," September 5). TNR has now allowed Lane's ranting about me to take up fifty column inches in two issues (see also "Blaming the Victim," Diarist, January 4). In January, he quoted me as saying my basis for claiming Bosnian government forces fired on their own people was established from "'hundreds' of wire reports...." My complete audio notes from four interviews with Lane are exact and contain no such statement by myself or Lane. There has been no acknowledgment or correction from Lane or TNR.

His new attack suggests that Lane's brief experience in Yugoslavia has not contributed to any enlightenment (see Misha Glenny's letter, "Check It Out," Correspondence, TNR, July 18). He told me last January 13 his total time in-country since the wars began was six weeks during six trips! This is *not* expertise.

Lane has searched high and low (mostly low) for deficiencies in my background, especially since our June 7 debate at Carnegie. In a letter to *Foreign Policy* Editor Bill Maynes, Lane urged Maynes to "investigate and evaluate" some new "data" he had uncovered. The first item, he said he'd been told, was that "Mr. Brock's wife is a native of Serbia, and a Serbian nationalist." My wife is an American citizen of Mexican and Japanese heritage. This is racist.

I've traveled regularly throughout the Yugoslav republics for extended periods since 1976. My conclusions of anti-Serb bias and unfair reporting in Western media are derived from careful analysis of more than 10,000 wire service and news reports since 1989.

PETER BROCK
El Paso, Texas

To the editors:

We do not find that Charles Lane's charges against Brock's article stand up, except in a few isolated cases. We made a careful effort at the time to confirm Brock's allegations and we have since reviewed the documentary evidence Brock submitted to substantiate his analysis. Contrary to Lane's assertions, Brock's analysis comes not from "the Serbian regime," but primarily from various academic, press and U.N. sources. We continue to stand behind our fact-checking.

Foreign Policy offered to allow Lane to examine the documentation it had assembled to fact-check Brock's article. *Foreign Policy* also proposed to publish any critique he assembled. Lane declined. Had he accepted, he would have discovered, for example, documentation directly contradicting his assertions about a February 10, 1993, U.N. Commission on Human Rights report concerning the number of rapes in Bosnia. Lane claims that the report cited by Brock "did not contain the number 2,400 [rapes] *anywhere.*" The figure can be found on page 75 of the report.

A final point: No one has said that "Serb war crimes are just a figment of media bias." Brock's article opens with a statement citing "overwhelming evidence" of such crimes. The issue is whether the media have presented a balanced picture of the war. In addition to Brock, Sylvia Poggioli of National Public Radio in a report to the Nieman Foundation, Jacques Merlino of France 2, Max Clos of *Le Figaro* and Misha Glenny of BBC have all raised questions about the quality of the coverage. Are they all dupes as well?

CHARLES WILLIAM MAYNES
Editor, Foreign Policy
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

Charles Lane describes as a "most chilling moment" an observation I made about *The New York Times* during a public discussion of the role of the media in the Yugoslav conflicts. On this occasion I noted, with pride, that in its editions announcing the June 6, 1944, D-Day invasion, the paper cited at length the reporting by DNB, the Nazi German press agency, which was the first to disclose the massive landings. I then remarked that in the American coverage of the three-sided Bosnian conflict, information provided by the (Serb-run) Tanjug news agency was seldom used, meaning to me that there was a lack of balance in reporting. I cannot fathom what chills Lane about taking note of what various sources have to say about major events, including opponents such as the Nazis in 1944, especially if those adversary sources are first with the news.

DAVID BINDER
The New York Times
Washington Bureau
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

Bravo for printing Charles Lane's exposé of Peter Brock's complicity with the Serbs. Brock joins Gen. Lew MacKenzie and a caravan of opinion writers, such as Alexander Cockburn and Misha Glenny, in promoting the Serb agenda. At one time, *Foreign Policy* was considered *the* forum where ideas from the entire political spectrum were exchanged; now it is an organ for Serbian propagandists.

DR. JERRY N. BLASKOVICH
Rancho Palos Verdes, California

Charles Lane replies:

Peter Brock's "audio notes" are wrong: I was in *Sarajevo* six times—as I told him and also wrote in my Diarist (titled "War Stories," not "Blaming the Victim," as Brock writes). Brock did not go to Sarajevo at all. He should say which reports prove Bosnian Muslims "frequently" shell their own. Those he has cited so far have been discredited. At our debate, Brock himself raised the issue of his motivation and possible affiliations, claiming to be objective because he is "not of any Yugoslav ancestry." It was not "racist" to examine this assertion, especially since the P.R. proposal he wrote for the Serbian-American lobby referred to Serbs in the first-person plural.

The figure of 2,400 rape victims does not appear in the text of the U.N. report, but amid documentary and technical notes attached to the end of its rape chapter. It is *not* a maximum estimate intended to counter higher estimates, as Brock and Charles William Maynes imply. Rather, the footnote makes clear that it is a "conservative" extrapolation of how many victims there might be *just in the areas served by six hospitals the U.N. visited.* The report said that because of "profound" *under-reporting*, the 119 cases of rape-induced pregnancy suggest "widespread" rape, most of it by Serb forces.

Maynes's "offers" to examine *Foreign Policy*'s documentation are not quite as magnanimous, and my "refusal" not quite as peremptory, as he implies. His offers occurred when I approached him for comment for TNR in Berlin in early July. By then, I had already reviewed most of the references cited in Brock's article. I had interviewed *Foreign Policy*'s fact-checker. I also had done research that *Foreign Policy* did not do—such as contacting witnesses to events Brock purports to describe. Detailed results had been presented to Maynes and Brock for their specific comment, but both declined.

No one said Serb crimes are a figment of media bias? How else to describe Brock's claim that camp inmates identified by the media as Muslims are "in fact" Serbs? The lone sentence Maynes cites is a fig leaf.

Pace David Binder, Tanjug's reports are frequently noted—though the agency is not often "first" with anything but the party line of the Milosevic government that controls it. At the debate, Binder never mentioned anything about the Nazis' or Tanjug's being first. I doubt he'd be proud of a *New York Times* scoop

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about, say, Joseph Goebbels's perspective on Theresienstadt.

Bedroom

To the editors:

I'm sure I was not the only urban planner to be stunned by your September 5 cover, which proclaimed, "Inglewood's Urban Heaven ... Glendale's Suburban Hell." Why is Inglewood urban and Glendale suburban? Glendale is as dense as Inglewood, and as close to downtown Los Angeles. Glendale also has a rather urbanlike core of office towers and pedestrian life, while Inglewood comes much closer to resembling the classic "bedroom community." To call Inglewood "urban" and Glendale "suburban" makes sense only if the former term means minorities and the latter means whites. Let us reclaim the primary meanings of these terms, rather than using them as racial code words pandering to defensiveness and rage.

JARRETT WALKER
San Francisco, California

Bio-degradable

To the editors:

Ann Hulbert's article about literary biography ("The Soul and Discretion," August 22 & 29) understates the degree to which biographers may quote from unpublished letters and other writings of the subject without permission. She writes, "In the wake of [J. D.] Salinger's suit against [Ian] Hamilton, biographers are now restrained by law from quoting from unpublished documents, except with permission." While that is substantially a correct statement, in 1992 Congress amended the copyright law to expand the right to quote from unpublished documents. This was extremely important legislation, as the *Salinger* ruling had interfered tremendously with the writing of biographies and other non-fiction. Some degree of quotation is now certainly permissible.

PAUL J. SLEVEN
Chairman, Subcommittee on Fair Use
American Bar Association
New York, New York

Local in origin

To the editors:

Regarding Weston Kosova's "Where's the Pork" (September 5): whether one calls it pork or social spending, the crime bill passed by the House still has $7 billion in spending that more properly belongs under HHS, unless one argues that all social spending is really crime prevention.

The assault weapon ban also troubles me. While only nineteen specific weapons are named, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms is granted authority to add to the ban any weapon it determines to possess assault weapon characteristics, without obtaining further congressional approval. The proposed list already being drawn up proscribes up to 250 additional models.

This whole debate has avoided a crucial truth about crime; the blood, bullets and break-ins that scare people are local in origin and cure. Federalizing violence against women may make us feel better, but we still are not going to be calling out the FBI on domestic abuse cases. Violent crime has declined in the last two years. Apparently local governments are doing something right. The $30 billion we are about to spend may have a more measurable effect in the fall congressional campaigns than in the streets.

SPECIAL GOLDEN STATE ISSUE
THE NEW REPUBLIC
WEST COAST STORY
California's Candidates Slug It Out Over Crime
by Fred Reed

JIM RYAN
San Angelo, Texas

Sweet but clueless

To the editors:

Finally someone with an unkind word to say about the movie *Forrest Gump* ("Different" by Stanley Kauffmann, August 8)! Kauffmann's comparison of Gump to *Being There* is right on the money. The difference between the two films highlights why the latter is intelligent and thought-provoking and the former is mere feel-good (or -numb?) pabulum.

In *Being There*, the audience is invited to laugh at those who come in contact with the soft-brained gardener Chance. Infatuated with what they take to be his down-to-earthness, the characters hang on his every word (there aren't many anyway), and eventually, it appears, will put him in the White House. In *Forrest Gump*, however, it is the audience, ten years more desperate, that blindly follows the sweet-but-clueless hero Gump down the garden path.

AVIVA WEINTRAUB
New York, New York

Rush to judgment

To the editors:

In your September 12 Correspondence section you published a letter from Margaret Bradley criticizing Joshua Shenk's "Limbaugh's Lies II" (August 8). Bradley faults Shenk for citing Limbaugh's statement regarding Texas Governor Ann Richards that "she was born needing her face ironed." Bradley notes this is a humorous jibe (or a cheap shot, depending upon your viewpoint), not a lie. True enough, but Bradley failed to read the article very closely. Shenk cited this quote of Limbaugh's not as a lie in itself, but rather as an example of Limbaugh's oft-repeated lie that he refrains from ad hominem attacks, which this quote certainly is.

ED SCHOCH
Los Angeles, California

Broken-bat single

To the editors:

As humorous as the text of "Field Mice" (TRB, September 5) was, the irony of Robert Wright's article was funnier. Over the past year or so, TNR has lambasted greedy doctors who average more than $136,000 and corporate CEOs who earn more than $1 million per year ($5 million for Lee Iacocca), twenty times more than their lowest-paid employees. These excesses have prompted TNR to call for salary caps for doctors and CEOs. But cap baseball players fees? Blasphemy! As a guy who works for a living, I can no longer afford to take my wife and two kids to a pro ballgame. Besides, I'd rather pay the greedy doctor who just set my son's broken arm.

MICHAEL COLLINS
Virginia Beach, Virginia

Something Wilder

To the editors:

In "Gone to Pot" (September 5), Stephen Rodrick writes, "Thornton Wilder once said nothing succeeds like excess." Perhaps Mr. Wilder said it. But if he did, I believe he was quoting Oscar Wilde ("Moderation is a fatal thing; nothing succeeds like excess").

ANDREW SOLOVAY
Oakland, California

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FROM WASHINGTON

Doleful cynicism

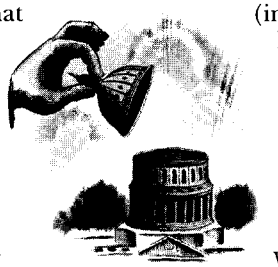
The words "Dole" and "cynical" have a tendency to appear in close proximity to one another. Typically the juxtaposition is not flattering: Bob Dole is "a mean and cynical opportunist" (from *The Boston Globe*), "cynical, opportunistic" (*The St. Petersburg Times*), "a grumpy, old, cynical Republican" (*The Minneapolis Star Tribune*) and so on. But sometimes "cynical" is meant more amiably: Dole is "detached, wry, cynical. He makes fun of himself, his party" (from the cynical *New Republic*). Apparently Dole's second kind of cynicism is meant to take the edge off his first kind. When he says he chose his party affiliation after determining that Republicans outnumbered Democrats among Kansas voters, he is showing candor so rare in a politician that it's tempting to forgive him for being one.

But forgiveness has its limits. Dole is now pulling a cynical stunt that could set back the cause of free trade by decades, roil world financial markets and, maybe, if those markets take a sharp southward turn, even shove some countries back into the recessions they're crawling out of. If any of this does happen, it will take a way-above-average wry wisecrack to shelter Dole from the fallout.

The issue is U.S. membership in the World Trade Organization, the aspiring successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. To everyone's surprise, purported free-trader Dole recently threatened to put off congressional action until next year; similar noises have been made by purported free-trader Newt Gingrich. Both have suggested, in particular, holding the WTO hostage until Clinton gives up his increasingly meager aspirations on health care reform. This is high-drama stuff. The WTO is supposed to come into being on January 1, and U.S. approval is the linchpin; the whole world is waiting, and getting fidgety.

A primary goal of Dole and Gingrich, it seems, is the simple humiliation of President Clinton. (Also relevant, perhaps, is the $200,000 donated to a Gingrich-run Republican PAC by textile magnate Roger Milliken, who bankrolls those frightening "Save Our Sovereignty" anti-WTO ads.) The *stated* goal of Dole and Gingrich, in contrast, is to resolve grave doubts about the substance of the WTO agreement. Odd that these doubts would beset the Republican leadership only now, since the WTO is mostly a Republican production. Negotiations started under Reagan, the contours of the WTO took shape under Bush, and Clinton applied the finishing touches.

Dole and Gingrich raise various questions about the WTO, but the one with the most political force is the famous "sovereignty" issue—as in the ever-colorful Pat Buchanan's phrase, "a Munich-style betrayal of American sovereignty." This is what Buchanan said about NAFTA, too. NAFTA has been in effect for nine months. Feel that terrifying loss of control over our national destiny?



Signing *any* international agreement is a pledge to constrain future behavior, and in that sense is an erosion of sovereignty. The question is how dramatic and reversible an erosion. In the case of the WTO, the legislation explicitly guarantees what is implicit anyway: we can bail out if we don't like it.

But, assuming we don't bail out, what about those "secret tribunals" Buchanan keeps talking about? They are international panels for resolving disputes over compliance with trade rules. WTO members will agree to submit trade complaints to the panels rather than unilaterally impose punitive sanctions. Some panel may, of course, decide against the United States; it may tell us to make some recompense for violating trade rules. I hope and expect that we'll obey, and that other countries will, too. But sovereignty freaks should rest assured that we can always refuse. In that case the aggrieved nation will have WTO permission to levy sanctions against the United States—something any country can now do *without* special permission. A study by political economist Joe Cobb notes that "the worst outcome for a party that loses a dispute is equivalent to the situation every country faces today." Cobb's pro-WTO report was published by the conservative Heritage Foundation, which wasn't a hotbed of woolly-minded one-worldism the last time I checked.

But why do we need these spooky "tribunals" in the first place? As the various Republicans who pushed for them over the years know, the idea is to insulate trade disputes from special interests and raw nationalism. When we complain about, say, Japanese rice quotas, we would like our argument judged by some other than the politicians elected by Japanese farmers. And the Japanese would like our arguments judged by some other than us. Fair enough.

The people complaining loudest about this "subversion of sovereignty" are the best argument for it. The Pat Buchanans and Ross Perots of the world foster a xenophobia and a whining sense of grievance that forces elected representatives to seek better-than-fair deals, making old-fashioned, bilateral dispute resolution difficult. But even without demagogues, the WTO would be needed. Dole is a great example of why. He has backed around a dozen bills to subsidize American ethanol (implicit protectionism) or to keep foreign ethanol out (explicit). Much domestic ethanol, as it happens, contains Kansas corn. Comically, Dole occasionally interrupts his special pleading to announce his intention "to figure some way to ward off protectionism." He also occasionally denounces Japanese agricultural import quotas—a position that, awkwardly, he trumpeted most loudly during the 1988 presidential primaries, just as he was calling for American textile quotas in a pathetic bid for votes.

The point isn't that Dole is especially protectionist, nationalistic and hypocritical. He's probably not much worse than average—average for an American politician, average for a Japanese politician. That is exactly why trade disputes must, for the good of people everywhere, be taken from the hands of politicians in the contesting nations and placed in the hands of third-party panels that, by deliberating in private, can escape political pressure. Not all the results will be just, but there will be more justice than now. And if there's not, we can always take our ball and go home.

Of course, there is the one sense in which Dole *isn't* typical of American or foreign politicians: his second kind of cynicism. He has justified efforts to keep Brazilian ethanol out of America by saying, "I'm a farm state senator." Well that's endearingly candid of him, but surely a person with such detachment can grasp the implications of a world full of politicians like himself: a need to keep them at a safe distance from trade disputes. The bedrock principle of the World Trade Organization is cynicism. Every self-aware politician should love it.

ROBERT WRIGHT

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

OCTOBER 10, 1994

COMMANDER IN CHIEF

Haiti is the first time since Vietnam that a Democrat in the White House has ordered a large force of American troops into harm's way abroad. President Clinton inherited Somalia. This is an intervention of his own making. His handling of it will do much to determine not only the fate of his presidency, but also how a generation of Americans views the capacity of his party to use military force with intelligence and resolve.

So far, not so bad. Through Jimmy Carter (irony of ironies), Clinton struck a bargain that calls for the departure of the Haitian dictators by a fixed date—upon which Clinton insisted—of October 15. Thus, the main objective of U.S. policy was on its way to being achieved without a shot being fired or a life being risked. The Clinton administration crows that this is an example of the effectiveness of diplomacy, backed by force. We hope they believe this; and apply its lessons in the future.

Having won this confrontation at the brink, Clinton must now show even more resolve in seeing Operation Uphold Democracy through to a successful conclusion. On this score, the early returns are less promising. First, there is the problem of sudden moral confusion. The American mission in Haiti began as a crusade to take out Haiti's military thugs. It has mutated into an effort to pacify the island with the "cooperation" of those very thugs, whom our government now describes as honorable men—and whose salaries our government will now be paying! Just how awkward this transition could be was shown in the streets of Port-au-Prince last week, when Haiti's police notched their first post-intervention political murder—right in front of U.S. soldiers.

No wonder President Jean-Bertrand Aristide is radiating ambivalence about a U.S. intervention that he had been led to believe would result in the dismantling of Haiti's repressive apparatus. We, too, are puzzled by the morally and politically cloudy talk emanating from the Pentagon. The military speaks in neutral terms of "Haiti's history of violence" and "Haitian-on-Haitian violence"—neither of which the American forces will lift a finger to correct, much less affix blame. It has the eerie feel of Bosnia. (Whatever happened, by the way, to those Jamaican and Belizean policemen we went to such trouble to train in order-keeping, etc.?)

The best way to keep casualties to a minimum would have been to stay home in Fort Drum. The fixation on American casualties and "mission creep" represents the U.S. officer corps' fear of another Vietnam-style quagmire, or another Somalia, as well as their professional duty to their subordinates. But too much public handwringing about this communicates American ambivalence to potential spoilers. The outcome may be *more* U.S. casualties than would result if potential troublemakers were simply put on notice that any attacks would only stiffen our resolve.

Knowing that the military was gun-shy, and that public and congressional opinion was chilly toward intervention, the administration has endeavored from the beginning to fine-tune the political consequences. It promised a multilateral mandate, and a limited mission. The Cedras-Carter pact helped the president maneuver into Haiti, between critics on his party's left who said he wasn't showing enough concern for a black republic and (more numerous) critics, both Democrat and Republican, who said Haiti wasn't worth a single American life.

But now that we're in, we can't leave without something more tangible to show for our efforts than a "safe and secure environment," or even a zero American body count. The best goals are still the original ones: to remove the current de facto government; to dismantle the repressive police and military apparatus that served it; and to construct a new, democratic constabulary force under the leadership of elected civilian authority. This doesn't have to be a never-ending task of "nation-building," as our military fears. It is basically what we did in Panama and Grenada after taking out their dictators. The work didn't last forever, and though not exactly a moral revolution for those countries, the missions weren't failures, either.

Whether he likes it or not, Bill Clinton has now assumed responsibility for a small country's future. No action he takes, or fails to take, will be seen by the people of that country as apolitical. Obviously it is preferable to achieve American goals by bringing Haiti's political actors together through negotiation, but we cannot shrink from using force when necessary. In either case, the United States inevitably will have to take stands and take sides, even at the risk of some casualties. As out of character as such behavior may be for this president, it is the only way he can turn his still-uncertain intervention into a proud example of what a reconstructed Democrat can achieve as commander in chief. •

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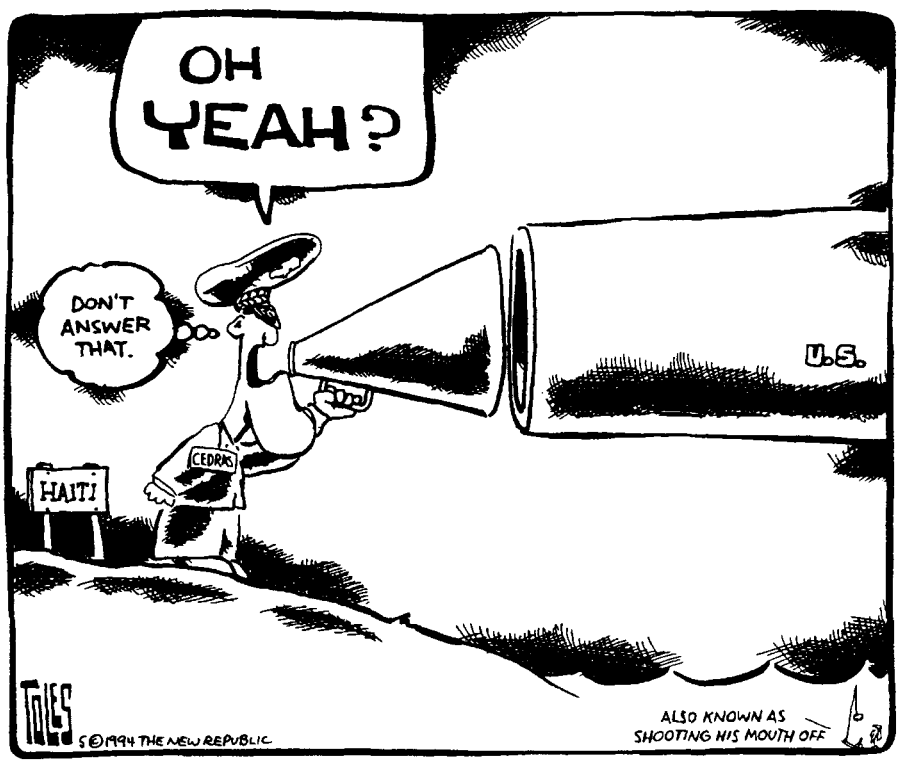
NOTEBOOK

SIC TRANSIT: The baseball season, and an opposed invasion of Haiti, were canceled. Former United Way President William Aramony was indicted for diverting hundreds of thousands of dollars from the charity. Former U.S. Treasurer Catalina Villalpando received a four-month prison sentence for lying to get her job and under-reporting her taxable income. A Texas man was arrested and taken to a mental hospital after trying to charter a plane to visit President Clinton. Jimmy Carter described genocidal dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia as "charming, his wife is one of the most beautiful women I've ever seen in the world, she was like King Solomon's daughter, and eloquent and personable." North Korea requested "several billion dollars" in compensation for overhauling its nuclear program. A Seattle judge ruled that a 410-pound convicted murderer was too obese to be hanged and recommended a reduced sentence. The British government ended a ban on broadcasting the spoken words of members of Sinn Fein, the IRA's political wing. An art show put on by the nuns of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio, Texas, was canceled after viewers objected to sculptures of genitalia and a picture of an angel having sex. In the wake of the Quebec election, New Brunswick Premier Frank McKenna told Canadians, "I think we should take a Valium and stay calm." Social Democrats came to power in Sweden. Phoenix Suns basketball player Charles Barkley said he will run as a Republican for governor of Alabama in 1998. Lawyers began soliciting the families of USAir crash victims. Russian legislators completed classes at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. The new season of *Melrose Place* began with Sydney's being committed to a mental asylum. Hong Kong held its first election. Attorneys for Representative Dan Rostenkowski said the Justice Department erred in describing him as a common thief. In Bosnia, armed Serbs drove another 3,000 civilian Muslim Bosnians from their homes in a stepped-up campaign of ethnic cleansing. The Factoryville Sportsmen's Club discontinued selling, for fund-raising purposes, shooting targets with the name of Senator Harris Wofford at the center, underneath "Gun owners ... let's target the real problem." The Census Bureau reported that the median income of black families in 1992 was 54 percent of the average for white families, down from 69 percent in 1969. Miss Alabama, who is deaf, beat out Miss Virginia, who spoke in favor of "multicultural awareness," for the title of Miss America.



AND A DOUBLE ESPRESSO FOR ME, TOO: Well, we asked for it. Readers responded to our call for boring headlines this summer with an avalanche of tedium. The contest, this time, was occasioned by our catching sight of a *Financial Times* headline last June: "Record Low Turn-out in Netherlands Euro Poll." This particular genre of headline—nothing much happens in places where nothing much usually happens—garnered its fair share of entries. "Canadians Content, Survey Finds," blared the *Globe and Mail* last July; not to be outdone, *The Boston Globe* announced later in the summer, "Nothing Much Going On in Beltway." For some unaccountable reason, readers found headlines involving Canada, our friendly neighbor to the north, almost worthy of a section on its own. There's something, after all, both lackluster and touching about "Canadian Wheat Blamed," from the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, beaten out only by the somewhat anticlimactic "Many Ignore Canada's Day of Independence," from the *Sun Sentinel*. "Some Swedes Live in Comfort—For Now" has just about the right level of suspense and dullness to make for a strong contender; "New Zealand: Laboratory for Air Transport Development" managed to prompt a brief narcoleptic interlude, although headlines for specialist magazines, in the editors' judgment, had an unfair advantage. Still, obscurity has its merits: "Mussina Has Tightness

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BEFORE OUR DESIGNERS CREATE A CAR THEY TALK TO OUTSIDE *EXPERTS.*

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Beneath Shoulder Blade" from *The Washington Post* is pleasantly precise; "Vietnam Finds First Live Example of Rare Ox" (*The New York Times*) and "Astronaut Gets Dead Newt Out of Tank" (*The Washington Post*) both provoke the metaphysical question: Would a dead example or a live newt have been any more interesting? Another category consists of those headlines that tell you very seriously that something potentially noteworthy actually didn't occur: "Local Earthquakes Rarely Noticed" comes close to a classic, followed swiftly by our favorite—"Tourism Bureaus May Consolidate, But Not Right Now," from the *Charleston Gazette*. "Human Rights Violations Continue in World," from *The New York Times*, falls into the related life-goes-on category, along with "State May Allow Drivers To Put Sticker in Window" (*New Haven Register*) and "Professors in 14-Nation Study Say Their Ideas Are Ignored" (*The New York Times*). "O.J. Case Hinges on Evidence" (*Chicago Daily Southtown*) and "Judge Lays Down the Law" (San Luis Obispo County *Telegram-Tribune*) tread not-so-new ground in legal journalism. "Appraisers Speak Out on Appraising" (*L.A. Times*) and—believe it or not—"Rain Helps Indiana Crops, Pasture" (*The Indianapolis News*) have an admirable banality to them. Occasionally, dullness is ruined by a sense of melancholy: "Former Accountant Returns to Food Industry" (*Houston Post*) has a poignant feel to it, and "Mobile Home Parks Can Be Appealing" from the Columbia County *Independent* sounds too sadly hopeful to be truly mind-numbing. All in all, the editors chose the entry submitted by William Blackman of Huntsville, Alabama, who concedes that the headline comes from the *Huntsville Times*, but "is pretty boring, even for Huntsville":

Local woman, 82, cleans out desk

Asleep yet?

PORK WATCH: When the Senate doled out money for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Senator Ernest Hollings, chairman of an appropriations subcommittee, made sure South Carolina got $2 million. Although the geodetic survey and special area management plan his constituents will enjoy might, for all anyone knows, be worthy projects, they weren't high on NOAA's list. In fact, the agency never sought funding for them at all. Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii also generously gave the NOAA a surprise gift of $1.25 million for fisheries development and stock enhancement. Apparently domestic stocks of mahimahi are "under stress." Though the senator's ichthyoidal concern is touching, the agency's comptroller would have preferred that some of that wad had gone to fund his plea for computer equipment, which got shortchanged half a million dollars. Unlike Christmas sweaters from grandma, though, the gifts from Hollings and Inouye can't be exchanged. •

CAMPAIGN '94

LOOPY TUESDAY

By Ben Sheffner

In 1991 Dr. Michael Blankenship of Texarkana, Texas, found two young boys shooting B.B. guns near his house. A report in his police record—full of arrest warrants, police complaints and restraining orders—noted that Blankenship allegedly ordered his son to chase the boys away with the family assault rifle. According to 12-year-old Nicholas Gallien's complaint, "Dr. Blankenship ... said he would blow our f— heads off. He said he would cut our balls off and he would f— kill us.... [His son] got an AK-47 and pointed it at us. Dr. Blankenship told [him] to cut us in half. I believe Dr. Blankenship will do these things because he was looking crazy and he was talking mean." Looking crazy and talking mean: it could be his campaign slogan. Blankenship is the first district's Republican nominee for Congress.

Blankenship may be the most volatile congressional candidate in this year's crop, but he faces stiff competition for the title of looniest. As a political reporter in Washington, I've interviewed well over 200 aspirants and found that for all the complaints about our legislature, it could be a lot worse. Here's a smattering of hopefuls, some of whom may be making law come 1995.

Democrat Richard "Mad Dog" Caligiuri, the cousin of a former Pittsburgh mayor, went after the seat vacated by Republican Rick Santorum, who is making a Senate bid. Caligiuri complained that no one paid attention when he talked about issues. His solution: posing nude in a full-page ad in a weekly alternative newspaper. His campaign slogan: "I'll kick your ass—philosophically." Caligiuri finished third in the Democratic primary.

Ernie Anderson, a veteran American Airlines pilot, is running against Democratic Representative Pete Geren in Fort Worth, Texas. In an interview, the 58-year-old Republican rambled on about President Clinton and taxes. Then he pulled out a *National Enquirer* article about UFOs slicing into passenger planes. He next ranted about food stamps, repeatedly jamming his index finger into another *Enquirer* article, this one about an alleged Boston welfare queen. Afterward, Anderson's political consultant confided to me, "We've got a lot of work to do with this guy."

Others could use some work on the basics. Irwin Savodnik, a psychiatrist from suburban L.A. with a Ph.D. in political philosophy, dumped more than

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$250,000 of his own money into his campaign, only to be thrown off the ballot for changing his party affiliation too close to the primary. Barbara Gregg, an alderman in Louisville, Kentucky, was kind enough to supply me with her biography, labeled clearly at the top "Bibliography." Then there's Ann DeVore, the Indiana state auditor, the front-runner to succeed Representative Phil Sharp. She *was* the front-runner, that is, until she forgot to file her candidacy papers at the secretary of state's office—100 feet down the hall from her own.

Honesty is usually admirable in politicians, but it, too, can surface in excess. I asked Bobbie Coray, a Utah Democrat, about her willingness to accept contributions from political action committees. "Not only will I take PAC money," she said with a huge grin, "but I will get down on my knees and *grovel* for it." Equally frank was California Democrat Mike Farber, who is trying to oust Republican Bob Dornan. After losing a House race in 1992, Farber moved to Dornan's district, forty miles away, to run this year. Did Farber move just for the election? "Oh, yeah," he said without hesitation, "I moved just to run."

Candor can also be frightening. Bob Terrell, who lost to Newt Gingrich in Georgia's GOP primary, said he favors the death penalty even for small-time drug offenses. "I'd shoot 'em myself in the public square, if they'd let me," he said, sounding disappointed that they wouldn't. And Republican prosecutor Steve LaTourette of Lake County, Ohio (see "Freshman Class" by John B. Judis, page 15), has publicly advocated Singapore-style caning. Flogging, he added, is O.K., too.

Others have a deeper appreciation for crime. Ordained minister Ted Stone, who ran this year in North Carolina, was addicted to amphetamines in the early '70s and took to holding up convenience stores for cash. At one heist, he shot and wounded a store clerk. In October 1976 Stone was released from prison after serving four years and three months; in May he took 13 percent in his district's GOP primary, finishing last.

Salmon farmer Shawn Hallisey, who this year entered Maine's second district Democratic primary, went Stone one better. In 1983 Hallisey ran a red light in New London, Connecticut, and plowed into another car, killing a 23-year-old teacher. He was sentenced to five months in jail. Days after that conviction, he was arrested for drunk driving. He also has served time for beating his wife. Hallisey argued that his record is not a black mark but in fact a credential. According to an A.P. report, Hallisey "told [Maine Public Radio] the lessons he has learned from the criminal justice systems in Maine and Connecticut over the past decade will enable him to make 'tough decisions' in Washington." Hallisey, though, garnered a mere 1 percent of the primary vote last June.

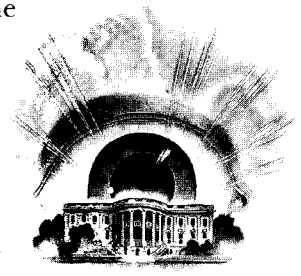
BEN SHEFFNER is an assistant editor of the *Cook Political Report.*

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

OH, ALL RIGHT THEN

By Fred Barnes

Last April President Clinton met with the parents of two Army Rangers killed in a bloody ambush in Somalia. "It was an awful meeting," says a White House official. One of the fathers asked Clinton how he could have approved the risky Ranger mission, since the United States was pursuing a political, not a military, tack at the time. Clinton didn't have a compelling answer. By the end of session everyone was in tears, Clinton, the parents, White House aides. A few weeks later the parents of two more Rangers came to the White House to accept, posthumously, the Congressional Medal of Honor for their sons. Afterward, Clinton put out his hand to Herbert Shughart, the father of one of the Rangers. The man refused to shake it. "You are not fit to be president of the United States," Shughart said. "The blame for my son's death rests with the White House and with you. You are not fit to command." Clinton gulped, and tried to explain, again without much success.



Given those wrenching episodes, the president was understandably wary of using military force in Haiti. "He was very, very reluctant," an aide says. Clinton's squeamishness about casualties wasn't the only reason. Post-Vietnam Democrats have a problem with the use of force: they're reflexively against it. And a Democratic president is also under enormous pressure from the liberal, generally dovish, wing of his party. As president, Jimmy Carter limited himself to dispatching eight helicopters on the failed Desert One mission to rescue hostages in Iran and to sending unarmed jets over Saudi Arabia as a supposed show of strength. Later, congressional Democrats jeered at President Reagan for invading Grenada and at President Bush for attacking Panama. A sizable majority of Democrats voted against congressional authorization of Desert Storm in 1991. And just as big a majority opposed an invasion of Haiti.

Yet, as counselor David Gergen gloated on September 19, the day American troops landed in Port-au-Prince, "this president pulled the trigger." Fine, but the question is whether he'll do it again, when the risks are greater. Did Clinton shed the Democratic aversion to the use of force? The minority of Clinton advisers who regard military action as a necessary tool of foreign policy are encouraged but hardly convinced. "The presi-

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dent has seen some benefits from marrying force and diplomacy," says a senior adviser. "It's a good little lesson." But, the aide says, "Haiti is not the best test case. Finding vital American interests is hard."

That didn't stop Clinton and his inner circle from clucking. Gen. John Shalikashvili, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the president's resolve "caused" Haitian Gen. Raoul Cedras "to blink." This, in effect, put the Haiti flap in the category of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. But the two crises are hardly comparable. In 1962 the issue was offensive missiles in Cuba, installed by a hostile nuclear power, the Soviet Union. In 1994 the issue was Cedras, whom the United States wanted out. Cedras has no army, no armaments, no allies.

Still, the fact that Clinton and his subordinates puff up the Haiti operation is a good sign. If they believe Haiti was a world-class crisis that warranted American military intervention, they may be delusional, but at least a Democratic president found a situation that called for military action. Clinton boasted it was his decision to send the 82nd Airborne streaking toward Haiti that prompted Cedras to agree to resign. "This agreement only came because of the credible and imminent threat of the multinational force," the president said. "Indeed, at the time the agreement was reached, sixty-one American planes were already in the air." Shalikashvili made the same point. So did Warren Christopher. "That's the way the facts look," the secretary of state told reporters. Not quite. Carter, who negotiated the agreement with Cedras, said the dispatching of troops almost upset the deal. Carter may be right, but so what? If Clinton *thinks* the military option worked, that's a step in overcoming his anti-war willies.

O.K., there's another side. In Haiti, the president had little choice but the military option. He had created a situation where, having threatened force, nothing else was viable. Had he backed down again in the face of Cedras's defiance, it would have been a political catastrophe. My guess is the public would have concluded Clinton is all chatter, no action. The president knew this. But despite his talk of how "the clear imminence of military action" prompted Haitian surrender, Clinton didn't make the case in his nationally televised speeches that he's now prepared to use force when vital American interests are jeopardized. National security adviser Anthony Lake said on September 12 that "our actions in Haiti will send a message far beyond our region—to all who seriously threaten our interests." Clinton needed to underscore that message but offered only boilerplate. "We remain ready to pursue our interests and our obligations in whatever way we have to," he said after Cedras's collapse.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

There's also a Jimmy Carter problem. Clinton didn't recruit Carter as his envoy to North Korea or Haiti; Carter recruited himself. Now Carter is established as the nation's envoy to trouble spots. That's fine as long as national security or other vital American interests are not at stake. If they are, Carter is the wrong man. His inclination is to avert the use of force at all costs. This is precisely the attitude Clinton needs to move beyond.

At least the president has gotten over his youthful loathing of the military. Civilian and military officials at the Pentagon opposed an invasion. But when Clinton insisted, they dazzled him with their detailed plan. The irony is that he didn't let them do what they do best, seize territory and take over, as in Grenada. Instead, U.S. soldiers have to work with local authorities, as in Somalia, and defer to Haitian cops, even when they beat protesters to death. The military brass, while never likely to admire Clinton, is eager to get along. As the president turned to leave a White House briefing on September 16, an admiral stopped him. Fifty soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division had been scheduled for discharge, and twenty-one asked to stay for the Haiti operation. "I just wanted to mention that," the admiral said. Clinton smiled gratefully. •

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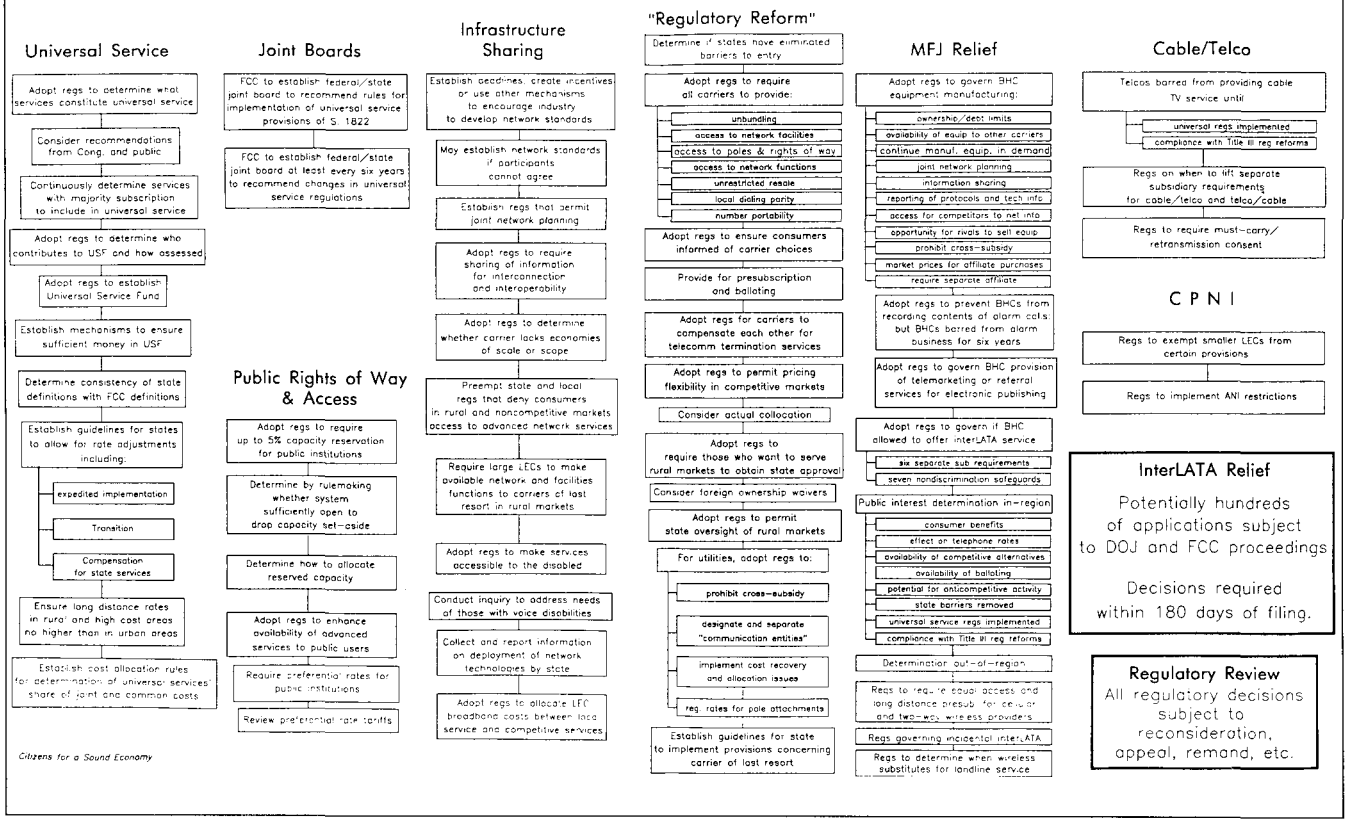
Federal Regulatory Actions Required by S.1822


Universal Service
Adopt regs to determine what services constitute universal service
Consider recommendations from Cong. and public
Continuously determine services with majority subscription to include in universal service
Adopt regs to determine who contributes to USF and how assessed
Adopt regs to establish Universal Service Fund
Establish mechanisms to ensure sufficient money in USF
Determine consistency of state definitions with FCC definitions
Establish guidelines for states to allow for rate adjustments including:
expedited implementation
Transition
Compensation for state services
Ensure long distance rates in rural and high cost areas no higher than in urban areas
Establish cost allocation rules for determination of universal services' share of joint and common costs
Citizens for a Sound Economy
Joint Boards
FCC to establish federal/state joint board to recommend rules for implementation of universal service provisions of S. 1822
FCC to establish federal/state joint board at least every six years to recommend changes in universal service regulations
Public Rights of Way & Access
Adopt regs to require up to 5% capacity reservation for public institutions
Determine by rulemaking whether system sufficiently open to drop capacity set-aside
Determine how to allocate reserved capacity
Adopt regs to enhance availability of advanced services to public users
Require preferential rates for public institutions
Review preferential rate tariffs
Infrastructure Sharing
Establish deadlines, create incentives or use other mechanisms to encourage industry to develop network standards
May establish network standards if participants cannot agree
Establish regs that permit joint network planning
Adopt regs to require sharing of information for interconnection and interoperability
Adopt regs to determine whether carrier lacks economies of scale or scope
Preempt state and local regs that deny consumers in rural and noncompetitive markets access to advanced network services
Require large LECs to make available network and facilities functions to carriers of last resort in rural markets
Adopt regs to make services accessible to the disabled
Conduct inquiry to address needs of those with voice disabilities
Collect and report information on deployment of network technologies by state
Adopt regs to allocate LEC broadband costs between local service and competitive services
"Regulatory Reform"
Determine if states have eliminated barriers to entry
Adopt regs to require all carriers to provide:
unbundling
access to network facilities
access to poles & rights of way
access to network functions
unrestricted resale
local dialing parity
number portability
Adopt regs to ensure consumers informed of carrier choices
Provide for presubscription and balloting
Adopt regs for carriers to compensate each other for telecomm termination services
Adopt regs to permit pricing flexibility in competitive markets
Consider actual collocation
Adopt regs to require those who want to serve rural markets to obtain state approval
Consider foreign ownership waivers
Adopt regs to permit state oversight of rural markets
For utilities, adopt regs to:
prohibit cross-subsidy
designate and separate "communication entities"
implement cost recovery and allocation issues
reg. rates for pole attachments
Establish guidelines for state to implement provisions concerning carrier of last resort
MFJ Relief
Adopt regs to govern BHC equipment manufacturing:
ownership/debt limits
availability of equip to other carriers
continue manuf. equip. in demand
joint network planning
information sharing
reporting of protocols and tech info
access for competitors to net info
opportunity for rivals to sell equip
prohibit cross-subsidy
market prices for affiliate purchases
require separate affiliate
Adopt regs to prevent BHCs from recording contents of alarm calls but BHCs barred from alarm business for six years
Adopt regs to govern BHC provision of telemarketing or referral services for electronic publishing
Adopt regs to govern if BHC allowed to offer interLATA service
six separate sub requirements
seven nondiscrimination safeguards
Public interest determination in-region
consumer benefits
effect on telephone rates
availability of competitive alternatives
availability of balloting
potential for anticompetitive activity
state barriers removed
universal service regs implemented
compliance with Title III reg reforms
Determination out-of-region
Regs to require equal access and long distance presub for cellular and two-way wireless providers
Regs governing incidental interLATA
Regs to determine when wireless substitutes for landline service
Cable/Telco
Telcos barred from providing cable TV service until
universal regs implemented
compliance with Title III reg reforms
Regs on when to lift separate subsidiary requirements for cable/telco and telco/cable
Regs to require must-carry/ retransmission consent
CPNI
Regs to exempt smaller LECs from certain provisions
Regs to implement ANI restrictions
InterLATA Relief
Potentially hundreds of applications subject to DOJ and FCC proceedings
Decisions required within 180 days of filing.
Regulatory Review
All regulatory decisions subject to reconsideration, appeal, remand, etc.

Source: Citizens for a Sound Economy / Beverly McKittrick

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Jews and Arabs build a five-star hotel.

HONEYMOON IN GAZA

By Ruth Shalit

Houston developer Issa Cook is stirred by the plight of the Palestinians. "I have a soft spot in my heart for them," he says. "I thought in my own small way I could do something to help out." Cook has already begun construction of ten luxury condominiums in the city of Ramallah. "Pure white stone with marble interiors," he says. "Every unit has a built-in kitchen and two and a half baths. Mirrors in the elevators, the whole works." Stephen Green of the Chicago-based Culligan International also has a plan. He hopes to market designer bottled water in the Gaza Strip—at $1.50 a pop. "They have a local spring that has a lot of history to it," he says. "It's that pride issue." Never mind that in a region with an average yearly income of $850, Green's consumer base will be limited to 1 percent of the population. "We are creating the commerce necessary for peace," he says.

These good works are the visions of Builders for Peace, a private group founded a year ago amid the euphoria of the peace signing on the White House South Lawn. Under a plan devised by Vice President Al Gore, a glitzy corps of Arab-American and Jewish businessmen would persuade their wealthy buddies to invest in the newly autonomous Palestinian territories in Gaza and the West Bank. The goal was a quick payoff in a region eager to reap the promised economic rewards of Middle East peace.

On September 12, Gore held a press conference to celebrate Builders' one-year anniversary. The group, chaired by James Zogby of the Arab-American Institute and former U.S. Representative Mel Levine of California, had just announced the first large-scale American corporate investments in the territories: nine projects, including the condos, the bottled water plant and a five-star, 295-room Marriott on the Gaza Strip. "The Builders for Peace program is making the Middle East a better, safer, healthier place to live," Gore said. "The hope and promise created last year are now being translated into economic development."

Then came the questions. "Why, a year after the handshake, does the PLO charter still call for the dismantling of Israel?" demanded Joe Polikoff, a syndicated columnist for Jewish newspapers. Zogby stiffened. "There are no conditions on our investment project!" he barked. "There are no conditions on our effort to bring capital and opportunity to the region. Next question?"

Sabri El-Farra, one of the investors, rose. "We are talking about a lot of fancy stuff here," he said. "But unless we address the infrastructure in Gaza ... none of this will ever get off the ground." Levine broke in. "Sabri, if we could try to keep this on economics...." "No, no," El-Farra continued. "This is about economics! The policemen do not have uniforms. There is open sewage flowing in the streets. Its stench is overpowering! I wish I could paint a better picture, but the truth has to come out." Zogby and Levine exchanged anxious glances. "You are really addressing yourself to some programs that might come before money-making ventures," Levine said. "Now I think it's time to head over to the reception."

Initially, Builders for Peace seemed promising. In a November 30, 1993, press conference, Zogby, joined by Vice President Gore, promised to effect "a quick, visible, material transformation of Palestinian lives." It hasn't quite worked out that way. At its first board meeting, the group began to fracture. Former Pan Am Chief Executive Najeeb Halaby started talking about Palestinian suffering under Israeli occupation. Max Kampelman, a prominent Jewish lawyer, rose in Israel's defense. The dinner, held at Washington's swank Hay-Adams hotel, degenerated into a shouting match. "Those individuals," protests Levine, "certainly didn't reflect the group."

Privately, the two men have conceded their house is divided. "There is not universal support in both their communities for this effort," admits a Builders' board member. "Jim has complained to Mel, 'Look at my position. When you Jews get pissed at each other, you threaten to mess up each other's funding. My guys threaten to kill each other with their fists right then and there.' " Others are more blunt. "Builders for Peace is a pain in the ass," says an administration official who has worked with the group. "They made a velvet banner with their logo on it that they wanted to hang behind the vice president at the press conference. I thought, Right, motherfuckers."

Despite the problems, Levine and Zogby have made common cause in this high-profile venture. Zogby, for years a fierce critic of Israel, still has an office bookshelf full of PLO-produced monographs with titles such as *Whither Israel? A Study of Zionist Expansion.* ("Those are old books!" he exclaims, pointing to an anthology of Jewish-American women writers.) Levine, once a congressional mouthpiece for the American-Israel Political Action Committee, lost a 1992 Senate primary to Barbara Boxer, and found himself, too, in need of a new platform following the signing of the peace accord. When Gore asked Levine and Zogby to run Builders for Peace, both jumped. Now, says Steven Rabinowitz, whose P.R. firm flacks for Builders, the two men are close friends. "You should have been in Mel Levine's hotel room the night before the press conference.... Levine was pouring wine for Zogby. [They] were kidding each other about their own ethnic communities."

At the group's first press conference in December,

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Zogby declared that Arab-American and Jewish financiers were "itching to get in" to Gaza and the West Bank. The big-dollar investors, however, failed to appear. "Think about it," laments one Builders staffer. "You've got $10 million, and want to invest it in an exotic place. Is the Gaza Strip the first place you'd go?"

Even beyond the physical dangers in the impoverished region, the hurdles for investors are daunting. Public services in Palestinian lands are in short supply, roads are poor and half of the population of 800,000 lives in shanties. "When I visited last month, there was open sewage on the street," says Tom Smerling of Project Nishma, a nonprofit group working on the region's infrastructure. "There were pipes spilling raw sewage onto the beaches and the ocean, only yards from where people were swimming. You see horse-drawn and donkey-drawn vehicles on the road." Worse, Gaza lacks any banking, commercial or legal systems to enforce contracts. "It's anarchy," admits Joe DeSutter, director of the group's Washington office.

Builders for Peace was founded on the assumption that the World Bank would allocate $2.6 billion in donor money to the PLO authorities—money that would enable them to address the immediate needs of the Palestinians and build an infrastructure. But the donor countries have refused to release the funds until PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat sets up an open accounting practice—something he so far has refused to do. Levine admits that until this question is resolved, progress will be bumpy. "We had always assumed that what we are doing would be complementary to what the World Bank is doing," he says. "Now there is a fear that we are putting the cart before the horse."

All the same, after the Cairo agreement in May completed the terms of Israeli withdrawal "there began to emerge some very interesting projects," says Levine. In a July press release, the group emphasized that "the key to initial economic development lies ... in small industries in the West Bank and Gaza—e.g., ready-made garments and agricultural products." These humble aspirations gave way to the flashy ventures unveiled at the White House last week. "There's no reason Gaza can't be rich," explains Ziad Karram, who is leading efforts to build a five-star hotel on the Gaza Strip. "Look at what Beirut used to be. It was the Paris of the Middle East.... Two years from now, Gaza will be a place that tourists and businessmen from all over the world can come to."

Others remain befuddled by the group's decision to peddle luxury goods while basic needs—hospitals, sanitation, transportation and communication systems—go unmet. Jim Lederman, editor of the *Middle East Executive Brief*, is stationed in Jerusalem, where news of the Gaza Marriott is already drawing hoots. "You have to have other infrastructure elements to draw international traffic," he says. "There isn't a single restaurant or nightclub in Gaza." Lederman recalls the opening last year of the Palestine Hotel in the city of Gaza. "The first week, there was a message spray-painted across the breakwater wall from Hamas, warning women not to dress indiscreetly. That's not the kind of thing that's going to impress visitors." Sighs one board member: "Rich Jews and Arabs want to build high-profile investments. There's nothing high-profile about a sewer." •

CAMPAIGN '94

FRESHMAN CLASS

By John B. Judis

CLEVELAND

No freshman Democrat has had a more promising first term than Representative Eric Fingerhut of Cleveland. The 33-year-old Fingerhut was made co-chair of the freshman delegation's task force on congressional reform. Last March he got a major anti-lobbying bill through the House. He has hewed an independent political line that reflects the diversity of his district, which ranges from working-class Brook Park to affluent Lake County. Fingerhut is pro-labor—he voted to oppose the North American Free Trade Agreement and to ban the permanent replacement of strikers. But he is also a fiscal conservative who supported the Penny-Kasich budget-cutting bill. He's thoughtful almost to a fault.

A thin, dour man who admits to having been a "policy nerd" as early as junior high, he is not a natural politician, though he has taught himself to play the part. On the day I spent with Fingerhut, he attended two Labor Day parades at opposite ends of his district. While other politicians rode in convertibles waving to the crowd, Fingerhut, a blue-and-white name tag stuck to the pocket of his Oxford button-down, insisted on walking and shaking hands with every man, woman and child. Afterward, he complained to me that he only got two political comments the entire day. "One guy congratulated me for voting for the crime bill. The other wanted to know how I could vote for it. He asked me if I read the whole thing, and I said 'Yes.' I asked him if he'd read it, and he said he hadn't but he had heard about it on C-SPAN." Fingerhut shook his head.

By all odds, Fingerhut's political precocity and his maverick views should make him a shoo-in for re-election. But congressional races have once again become a screen on which Americans project their frustrations. With an unpopular president and raging anti-government sentiment, Fingerhut faces a surprisingly close re-election battle against Steve LaTourette, a popular local prosecutor. "Obviously, we have this baggage from the last year and a half in Washington to deal with," Fingerhut says ruefully.

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Fingerhut's background spans the Democratic Party, old and new. His aunt was a union organizer who once ran for Ohio secretary of state on the Socialist ticket. His parents were more conventional Democrats. Fingerhut himself followed the trajectory of a good-government idealist. After law school he joined a prestigious Cleveland firm, but also worked as a Legal Aid attorney, as chairman of Ohio Common Cause and for a program to move welfare recipients into private-sector jobs. In 1989 he chaired Mike White's successful mayoral campaign; later that year he got elected to the state Senate, where he championed recycling and gun control. In 1992, when U.S. Representatives Ed Feighan and Dennis Eckart retired, Fingerhut ran in the new, marginally Democratic district that had been created east of Cleveland. He won narrowly, leavening his support for Clinton with an appeal for political and congressional reform.

On Capitol Hill, Fingerhut quickly distinguished himself. He also enraged some senior colleagues, including powerful Michigan Representative John Dingell, with his good government efforts. He became known, one Capitol Hill aide recalled, as "the prick who said we couldn't park at National Airport." Fingerhut introduced a pay freeze for Congress, legislation forbidding lobbyists from presenting gifts to members of Congress and a bill making the body subject to the same civil rights and workers' rights laws as private-sector employers. Fingerhut's relations with the Clinton administration also have been rocky. In May 1993 he held out until the last minute against the president's budget, arguing that the House and the administration had gutted whatever was progressive in the original plan. He backed the Penny-Kasich and "A-to-Z" budget-cutting efforts. If the administration had gone along with the cuts, he believes, the Federal Reserve might not have had to raise interest rates to dampen inflation.

Fingerhut came to Washington convinced he could work with the Democratic Leadership Council and its spinoff, the House's Mainstream Forum. He found, however, that while he agreed with these groups on many issues, he didn't like their hostility toward labor. He seems most at home with other reformers, such as Penny, Utah Representative Karen Shepherd and the Rustbelt members of Congress who belong to the House's Manufacturing Task Force.

The congressman sometimes sees politics itself as the problem. He says Clinton and the Democratic leadership failed to win health care reform partly because they allowed the bill to get swept up in partisan rivalry. Fingerhut thinks that when Clinton took office, the Democrats had a chance to create a bipartisan legislative committee to come up with a proposal that a majority could accept. "There was a mood in the country that could have been tapped by the administration to get people working together. There were also twenty Republican senators backing the Chafee bill for universal coverage." Though Fingerhut may be too optimistic about this, he's right about the failure of Clinton's partisan approach.

Of course, Fingerhut is not immune to narrow political impulses. When I asked him about his support for a balanced budget amendment, he admitted that he would be much more comfortable with a provision requiring Congress to balance federal operating expenses—leaving investments under a separate capital budget. He would also prefer to reserve the option of running deficits during economic contractions. "I am generally speaking a Keynesian with respect to economic policy," he says. But Fingerhut was moved to support the amendment partly out of a desire to accommodate its widespread backing in his district. "There is no question the support by a majority of my constituents was a factor," he admits.

Fingerhut's opponent, Lake County Prosecutor Steve LaTourette, achieved renown for gaining thirteen convictions in a cult murder case. While he may be a talented prosecutor, LaTourette has no demonstrable expertise in public policy. The twelve-page briefing paper his campaign sent me did not contain a single stand on a major issue—from health care to Haiti. Eight out of the twelve pages consisted of press clips inspired by LaTourette's charges that Fingerhut, in mailing a newsletter to his constituents, violated a promise to end congressional abuse of the franking privilege. Big deal.

When I asked LaTourette what he planned to run on, he didn't even mention the crime bill. Instead, he cited Fingerhut's support for Clinton's budget in 1993 and his opposition to term limits. Though Fingerhut is on record for term limits, LaTourette is taking advantage of a ruse last year by House Republicans who attached an amendment limiting the terms of committee chairs to a bill that Democrats opposed, ensuring that even Democrats like Fingerhut would go on the record against term limits. LaTourette's other charges are of similar gravity.

Nevertheless, the challenger has a good chance. Working-class Democrats are normally less likely to turn out in an off-year election than Republicans. That popular Republican Governor George Voinovich faces only token Democratic opposition makes their abstention even more likely. "There is no excitement within the core constituents of the Democratic party," says Bob Nece, a United Auto Workers official in Fingerhut's district.

Fingerhut won't be able to count on the district's sizable independent vote—in 1992, Ross Perot won almost 25 percent in the East Cleveland suburbs—even though his voting record is very close to that of United We Stand. Leo Fohl, a data processor who heads United We Stand in Fingerhut's district, is sharply critical of Fingerhut, citing the congressman's support for Clinton's budget. When I asked him whether he approved of Fingerhut's opposition to NAFTA, Fohl assured me that Fingerhut supported the trade pact. I asked him what the group wanted from a candidate. "Just a minute," he said, and I could hear frantic rustling of papers in the background. Then he listed two issues—campaign reform and the balanced budget amendment—both of which Fingerhut favors. Fohl's ignorance was abysmal, but he probably

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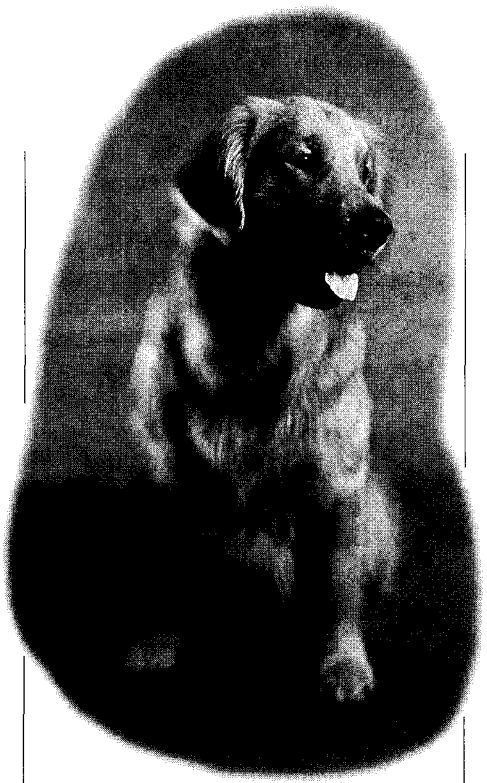

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follows Congress more closely than the average voter.

Fingerhut has done just about everything voters in his district asked him to do, yet he might not get re-elected. Why? "Media coverage focused on negatives," he told me by way of an explanation, as we lunched at Wendy's. "I have found that it is difficult to be heard. My voice is a whisper compared to the deadly pounding from the media." It's too facile an explanation, to be sure. The media are only tapping a much deeper source. But the problem is real, and LaTourette's strategy will be to take advantage of it. If he succeeds, it will be another sign of the distemper from which our politics suffers. •

SUKHUMI POSTCARD

REBEL MANDRILLS

By Anna Husarska

"Apes, although close to humans, do not carry passports," says Renat Karchaa. "And yet the flock I have in my charge suffers from statelessness." This is because the monkey nursery he operates is situated in Sukhumi, which for Abkhazians is the capital of their new republic. Sadly, for Abkhazians at least, the rest of the world thinks their country belongs to Georgia.

Located on the eastern coast of the Black Sea, Sukhumi was once a flourishing resort. The town's beautiful beaches, promenades lined with palmettos, eucalyptus and magnolia trees, oleander bushes and handsome candlelike cypress, could well be on the Côte d'Azur. Today, it is a distressing cross between Cannes and Sarajevo. The year-long war between Abkhazian separatists and Georgia, which ended in 1993, left Sukhumi, and its venerable monkey nursery, in ruins.

Founded in 1927, the nursery is the oldest such institution in the world. For more than sixty years it was part of the USSR's Academy of Science; its monkeys (up to 5,000 at a time, including capuchin, rhesus and baboon species) were used for medical experiments, testing of antibiotics and space flights (more on this later). But then came perestroika, and in August 1990, even before the Soviet Union collapsed, Abkhazia (population 500,000) declared its independence from Georgia. Meanwhile, in Georgia proper, the nationalist government of Zviad Gamsakhurdia rose to power, fueled by slogans such as "Georgia for Georgians."

Demographically, Abkhazians didn't stand a chance. They constituted only 18 percent of the country's total population. Georgians dominated with 40 percent, Armenians were 15 percent, Russians 14 percent and the rest—Greeks, Turks, others—made up a "demographic vinaigrette," as a woman in Sukhumi called it. The Abkhazians claimed to have justice on their side, however, arguing that the demographic balance was tilted to their disadvantage by the forced settlement of Georgians carried out by native son Joseph Stalin in the 1930s.

In August 1992 Georgian troops came to crush the Abkhazian independence drive. Amid the fierce fighting, one of the town's power stations was destroyed. Karchaa's monkeys quickly discovered that the low-voltage current, which kept them in their metal cages, had disappeared. They escaped. "Hungry, suffering psychological stress due to explosions and constant shooting, they roamed around Sukhumi, getting into the crossfire and approaching humans in search for food," Karchaa remembers tearfully. "A monkey usually dislikes people in uniform and most Georgians who attacked us, even the paramilitary, had uniforms, which only worsened the emotional state of our flock." Many rebel mandrills were shot dead while stealing food. Some were captured by Georgians and sold to the Turks for $68 apiece.

Abkhazians, not without some help from Russia, managed to push the Georgians back. Their forces retook almost all of what they had named the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia. It seems to have been a Pyrrhic victory, though. The town is virtually deserted: 60 percent of Sukhumi's 160,000 residents were forced to leave; as many as 10,000 people died in the fighting. The fourteen-story parliament building stands burned-out, and the wind scatters birth, marriage and death certificates in front of it. Across the street from the building, a park has been turned into a makeshift graveyard. On road signs, Georgian characters are painted over (often bullet-ridden, too) and on houses that once belonged to Georgians, the Abkhazians have scrawled "*Zanyat*" ("Taken"). I asked a man walking out of one such house what happened to his own. "It was looted and burned by my Georgian neighbors." So now he has taken three houses left empty after the Georgians fled. "Why three?" Well, he may rent two of them to tourists. Right.

Other than tourism, Abkhazia earned its way exporting tea and mandarin oranges. No more. The fields are larded with explosives planted by nonprofessionals who made no maps (even the botanical garden in the center of Sukhumi is said to be mined). Worse, there are no tea-pickers. The tea-pickers were mostly Georgian and 250,000 were displaced from Abkhazia. They now live in hotels in Tbilisi and in towns close to the Abkhazian border. Although the combatants reached an agreement to bring back the displaced people, the Sukhumi government has vowed to reject all Georgian fighters and their family members, meaning most everyone. As we were shopping in the barren Sukhumi market, Timur Gaitan, a painter, told me that he does not mind the emptiness of his country. "You have to let the wounds turn into scars. Now they are too fresh; many years will go by before I will be able to live next to a Georgian." Timur was a tank commander.

The day after my shopping expedition I met another tank commander in Zugdidi, a Georgian town barely

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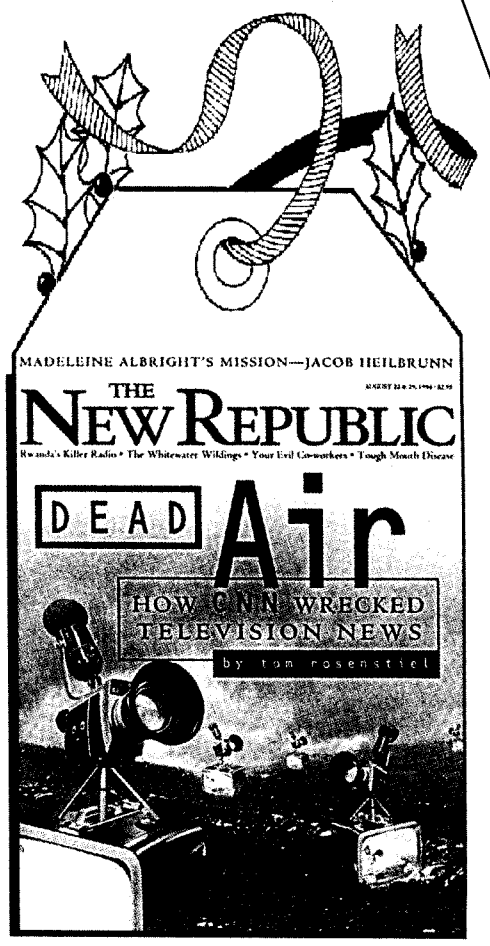
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five miles past the Inguri River—the de facto border between Abkhazia and Georgia. Avtandil, 28, is from Gali, the last town before the Inguri on the Abkhazian side. He and his buddy, Gocho, an astronomy teacher from Sukhumi, are camped out here, crammed with their relatives, while Gali is a ghost town, because 90 percent of its prewar residents were Georgians. Both men, along with other Georgians, demonstrate daily in the Zugdidi square and threaten to walk across the Inguri bridge by the thousands. (Thirty busloads were turned back in mid-September.)

The bridge is guarded by Abkhazians on one side, by Georgians on the other and by Russians, who call themselves "peacemaking forces," in the middle. The Russians are observed by the U.N. observers. Those "peacemaking forces" are a compromise between Russia's demand that the U.N. pay for Russian soldiers who would serve under the U.N. and U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's proposal to dispatch an international contingent of 2,500 with no more than 30 percent Russians. As it stands now, the "peacemaking forces" are 100 percent Russian, and are paid by Russia, but have the endorsement of the U.N. Security Council. In practice, this means that some 2,000 Russian soldiers, who have painted baby-blue bands on their helmets and their trucks, monitor the cease-fire. Meanwhile, 136 U.N. observers monitor the cease-fire and the Russian monitors, too. The monitors and the monitors' monitors have their headquarters in a Russian military sanatorium, which remains Russian territory, guarded by Russian soldiers, with two mosaics of Lenin at the entrance.

The prospects for Abkhazia are dim. Establishing close links with Russia would vitiate its independence; embracing Georgia is close to impossible. Recognition of the tiny country is unlikely given the blame Germany received for recognizing Croatia. But the status quo—an empty country with nearly half its former residents massed along the border—cannot last forever.

Back to the monkeys. Only 10 percent survived the war. Nevertheless, Karchaa still thinks the nursery can make a contribution. That's why he's writing desperate bottle-in-the-sea letters to "The Heads of States" (including Boris Yeltsin) informing them of his nursery and of its readiness to carry out medical experiments.

The only bright moment in the Abkhazian monkeys' lives over the last two years came in 1991, when twenty rhesus monkeys from Sukhumi were picked to travel to Moscow to train for a space flight. After a year of work (they learned how to operate in conditions of weightlessness, and were fed a puree of sugar, apples, raisins and dried apricots as reward for good performance) seven finalists were chosen to go to a launch-site in northern Russia. Two males—Vasya and Top Gun—went into the cosmos for a fortnight, accompanied by Lithuanian vegetable shoots, French amphibians and fertilized Canadian frog spawn. The whole band landed safely in Kazakhstan, an unexpectedly international space travel venture, considering that Vasya and Top Gun are both stateless. •

Who lost health care reform? You did.

SORRY, NO CHANGE

By Michael Kinsley

It's election season again, and the candidates' posters have sprouted on lawns around my neighborhood. As usual, they call for "change." One says, "CHANGE ... FOR THE BETTER!" Another says, "LEADERSHIP ... FOR A CHANGE!" But if American voters were at all honest with themselves about the experience of the past two years since they elected Bill Clinton president on a platform of "change, change, change"—especially the acrid and ultimately fruitless debate over health care reform—they would acknowledge that change is in fact the last thing they want.

The health care debate turned out to be a contest over who could promise *less* change. Clinton lost. But you might say he started it. His basic pitch, remember, was "health care that can never be taken away." For the minority of Americans who currently lack health insurance and can't afford it, this would be change indeed. But the currently uninsured are not an important political constituency, however sad their plight. For the vast majority of Americans who now have insurance coverage, Clinton's main selling point was freedom from *fear* of change: fear that you'll lose your insurance.

In the great tradition of all politicians of both parties since Ronald Reagan, Clinton offered this new security as a free lunch. His original health care address to Congress in September 1993 did contain one brief passage suggesting that health care reform would require sacrifices in order to produce its benefits. That passage started to make the right noises: "Let me say this—and I hope every American will listen, because this is not an easy thing to hear. Responsibility in our health care system isn't just about them. It's about you. It's about me. It's about each of us." But the thought meandered off into a muddle whose only clear point was that the uninsured should have to pay something for their coverage—politically speaking, a burden on "them," not on "us."

Clinton's chosen method of paying for universal coverage—employer mandates—had some policy logic. It also had the important political advantage of seeming to put the burden on a "them" rather than "us" (though the economists, at least among Clinton's advisers, knew perfectly well that the cost is mostly passed along to workers in the form of lower wages). Overall, Clinton's plan, and the accompanying sales campaign, attempted to obscure the dual truth that (*a*) you can't have universal coverage without paying for it, and (*b*) you can't have cost control without constraints (either through

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"the market" or through the government) on previously unconstrained consumer behavior. But Democrats will always lose a free-lunch bidding war to the party that invented the technique. By being less than frank about the costs and burdens of his own plan—by buying into the fiction that reform could be a free lunch—Clinton left himself open to opponents prepared to be even less frank than he was.

The main theme of opposition to Clinton's plan was the same as Clinton's own: fear of change. Under the proposal, opponents warned, you might not be able to keep your current doctor; you might not be able to have the same insurance arrangements you have now. The opponents' nightmare scenarios about the president's plan were partly lies, and partly the truth Clinton futilely tried to obscure: that you can't have change without things changing. In looking back on the debate, what's interesting is that what opponents played on was not necessarily the fear of things being *worse*, but the fear of their being *different*. The assumption was that different would necessarily mean worse. So much for "change."

Clinton's much-derided health care "alliances," for example, would have provided the typical health care consumer (who currently takes whatever arrangement his or her employer has on offer) far more choices than he or she has now. But no one could guarantee that those choices would include every consumer's precise current arrangement. This was an effective point for the opposition. Of course most health care consumers are deluded if they think they will enjoy the same arrangement, say, five years from now that they have today. "Change" is coming in any event. But that is "change" they won't be asked their opinion about.

Opposition to the Clinton plan came mainly from two corners. First, from Republicans determined to bloody the president's nose. Second, from interest groups with important stakes in current arrangements, such as small businesses, the insurance industry, the doctors. Most of these special interests actually supported parts of Clinton's original proposal. Trouble is, each group liked different parts. The insurers loved universal coverage and employer mandates but hated the alliances; small businesses loved the insurance regulation and government subsidies, but hated the employer mandates; and so on. Clinton thought he had put together a smorgasbord with something for every appetite. But he failed to reckon with the real politics of change: it is easier to stop what you're against than to achieve what you're for. With one or more of the interest groups against each major element of his plan, it was of little use to him that one or more of the same interest groups were also in support of each element.

Clinton's plan fell victim to criticisms that it was too bureaucratic and governmental. Much of this criticism was exaggerated to the point of dishonesty. The plan hardly amounted to "socialism" or "a government takeover of one-seventh of the economy," as it was often described. And the fuss over "secret meetings" of the Hillary Clinton-Ira Magaziner task force was simply ridiculous (as if there is something dastardly about administrations preparing their legislation in private before it is presented for public debate). But skepticism about those "alliances," global cost controls and other Magazineresque paraphernalia was fair enough. The Clinton plan is not the only way.

For those who reject the Clinton plan as too "big government," though, there are only two honest alternatives. One is to say there is no problem with our current health care system, or at least none that our government can usefully address. The other is to endorse a genuine, arduous free-market approach such as the original Heritage Foundation proposal (which I have had occasion to praise in these pages).

But there are problems with both of these honest alternatives. To declare there's "no problem" defies both objective and political reality. It's not true and—more to the point—it's not salable. As for the Heritage scheme, it would entail a stiff, progressive tax increase (in the form of a ceiling on the deductibility of employer-paid insurance). It would drive people by the millions into health maintenance organizations, or cause them to go without insurance completely for most medical expenses. In general it would force people to swallow more "change" than even ostensible free-market conservatives are prepared to shove down their throats.

So opponents of the Clinton approach, by and large, rejected both of these unappetizing alternatives. Instead, they offered various faux-free-market schemes that promised a freer lunch than Clinton's. This began, actually, with George Bush's last year, when he proposed what was essentially the Heritage plan minus all the unpleasant bits (such as paying for it). The Clinton-era leader of the opposition, Senator Bob Dole, has endorsed and retreated from a series of ever-diminishing alternatives, to the point where he now insists that a couple of minor insurance reforms will suffice.

The insurance-reform-only approach addresses Americans' fear of change directly by the simple technique of forbidding, Canute-like, the changes most Americans fear: that you can lose your insurance when you change jobs or get sick. It does nothing for folks without insurance now, but that is no political defect; politically, they don't matter. Insurance reform alone also won't work. Anyone who seriously looks into it knows this perfectly well, and ostensible devotees of free-market capitalism ought to suspect it in any event. You cannot simply wave your wand and forbid these undesirable market practices without causing huge rate increases and nightmarish (probably insoluble) bureaucratic and regulatory difficulties. But that is no political defect, either—especially since even insurance reform is unlikely to pass this year. Like other Republican panaceas—term limits, the balanced budget amendment, etc.—the political allure of insurance reform depends on its being unlikely to happen. So insurance reform is the free lunch du jour.

The collapse of his health care reform has occasioned another round of advice to President Clinton that he needs to become more moderate, govern from the cen-

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ter, be bipartisan, repent his "paleoliberalism" and return to his "New Democrat" roots and so on. This directly contradicts, of course, the pundits' other favorite leitmotiv, on alternate days, that Clinton must show backbone, prove he stands for something, stop waffling and compromising and so on. But, right or wrong in general, the call for "more moderation" is certainly the wrong lesson from the health care fiasco, for two reasons.

First, Republicans were determined to oppose anything Clinton came up with. Every time he took a step toward statesmanlike compromise, they took a step away from it. A year ago Bob Dole was saying yes, there was a health care crisis, and he was co-sponsor of fellow Republican Senator John Chafee's reform plan that provided universal coverage through a requirement that everyone purchase insurance (individual mandates), with a massive new government subsidy program to help pay for it. Dole now denies there's a "crisis" and denounces plans far more modest than Chafee's as too much "big government."

As E. J. Dionne has pointed out in *The Washington Post*, the definition of "moderate" kept changing. Clinton's original plan, whatever its substantive merits or demerits, *was* designed precisely as a compromise proposal that used market forces to the extent possible, and built on our present employer-based system rather than ripping it up in favor of a Canadian-style government plan. That's one reason it was so complicated.

The second problem with the siren song of moderation, regarding health care reform, is that "moderation" usually ends up meaning the free lunch. Sure, if Clinton gave up all the unpopular parts of his plan—the employer mandates, the provisional price controls, the tax increases, etc.—it would be more "moderate." It also wouldn't work. The same is true of a free-market plan stripped of the aspects that give market forces their bite. The "moderate" alternatives that came and went during the health care debate were political confections that—dare I say it?—could have used a sprinkling of Magaziner-type policy analysis if they were to be taken seriously as proposals that would achieve their stated objectives. This is especially true of the so-called Cooper Plan (sponsored by Democratic Representative Jim Cooper and enthusiastically touted by this magazine), which never got the skeptical scrutiny Clinton's plan got, and never would have survived it.

Press coverage of the health care debate has been widely and rightly criticized for concentrating too much on the political horse race aspect, because the actual policy issues are too boring and complicated. But even when journalists covered the policy rather than the politics (and many media outlets, both print and broadcast, made noble efforts), the analysis was too often in terms of a simple spectrum of more or less "government"—as if the only decision that needed to be made was where on this spectrum the country should choose to plop itself down. This allowed too many politicians to brag that they opposed Clinton's bad stuff while supporting his good stuff, without having to explain how they proposed to get the one without the other.

Now, according to the pollsters, comes the populist backlash—the welling up of popular disgust at politicians who have spent a year dithering with health care reform and come up with nothing. The Clinton strategists were counting on such a backlash to produce enough last-minute pressure to get some kind of plan enacted. But the backlash has been slightly different from what they expected. For starters, people blame the Clintons, among others, for the failure to enact a plan this year. They blame the president, they blame Hillary, they blame recalcitrant Republicans, they blame the special interests. Despite a year of negative hectoring, they still want—or say they want—"fundamental change" in the health care system, including universal coverage. They're absolutely furious at the politicians for failing to give them what they want. They loathe the "gridlock" in Washington. And yet, at the same time, two-thirds (according to a *Newsweek* poll) think Congress should give up and try again next year.

Next year, presumably, the politicians will be able to come up with that free lunch they keep promising: universal, guaranteed care without anyone paying more than now; cost control without anyone's current health care arrangements being disturbed. Change without change. The politicians do, indeed, deserve to be blamed for promising the free lunch and then being unable to deliver. But don't the citizens also deserve some blame for demanding the patently impossible, then exploding with childish rage at others when they can't have it?

And while we're apportioning blame, how about a bit for the polls themselves? They encourage and legitimize cheap attitudinizing by the populace: yes, I blame Hillary first, and the drug companies second, and Congress third ... and yes, I want universal coverage ... and no, I don't want a tax increase ... and HELL YES, I'm ABSOLUTELY FURIOUS at all those STINKING POLITICIANS who won't give me everything I want. Thank you for asking.

Now the United States will remain the only advanced country in the world that can't find a way—*some* way—to provide health care to all its citizens, and the only one that spends anywhere near as much on the system it has. Tales of foreigners coming here for medical care miss the point. The point is that democracies like Canada and Britain and Germany and Japan are perfectly free to repeal their systems in favor of one like ours, if they wish, and yet there is no political constituency for doing so. Not even a conservative politician would dare to propose it. Margaret Thatcher spent twelve years indignantly denying a wish to dismantle the National Health Service, the way Republicans here indignantly deny any desire to tamper with Social Security. A Canadian-style system may not be the right answer. But the citizens of these other nations have come up with *an* answer. Why can't we? It's not just the fault of the politicians and the special interests. •

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The case for Clinton's diplomacy.

My So-Called Foreign Policy

By Owen Harries

Whether it was worth doing in the first place is highly debatable, and how it will end remains to be seen. But it looks as if the Clinton administration may be stumbling toward something resembling success in Haiti. Certainly, things are looking much more promising than anyone had the right to expect, given the record of messy negotiations, mixed signals and abrupt reversals built up in our dealings with that country over the last year and a half. During most of that time it seemed that the president didn't know what he was about and that his administration was at odds with itself. Yet now the outcome doesn't seem so bad. True, there will inevitably be complications in a tricky transition. But a particularly nasty dictatorship is in the process of being removed; there has been as yet no loss of American lives; and there is emerging at least a chance to test whether the phrase "a democratic process in Haiti" is an oxymoron.

One can, of course, just put all this down to good luck, and there has certainly been some of that. But a more intriguing and subversive possibility suggests itself: What if Haiti is a paradigm of Clinton's foreign policy as a whole? What if the surface confusion conceals some sound qualities? What if the noisy blundering represents more than the incompetence of an administration—what if it is in fact the sound of a country clumsily coming to terms with its post-cold war role in the world?

Recently, of course, the consensus about Clinton's record has been far from positive. Disappointment both about the world and the administration has abounded. It was not, after all, supposed to be like this. We were not supposed to be dismayed by the state of the world and raging against the feebleness of American foreign policy so soon, less than halfway through the 1990s. When the decade began the United States was enjoying the most spectacular foreign policy triumph in its history. The Soviet Union wasn't just beaten on points, it was dismembered. Communism wasn't just relegated to second place, it was utterly delegitimized. And all with remarkably little blood shed.

The United States was left both unrivaled in terms of power and the undisputed ideological champion of the world. Conditioned as we all were to the dichotomous thinking of the cold war, it seemed self-evident that the collapse of the most radical experiment in socialism established the universal validity and superiority of the two central American doctrines: liberal democracy and market capitalism. Just as the disappearance of the Soviet Union left a world without a major villain (a presumptuous middle-sized one was promptly slapped down in January 1991), so too it meant that there was no serious ideological challenge in sight.

The United States, we were told over and over, was now the "sole remaining superpower," with the clear implication that its will would prevail in the new era. The only thing required was the appropriate "vision" to inform the "global leadership" that this status entailed—and that, it was commonly assumed, an eager world was awaiting. Pundits enthusiastically settled down to formulate and debate the merits of competing (and overlapping) "visions." Most of these postulated a benign and harmonious world, which would be brought about more or less spontaneously by the spread of democracy, or the ineluctable logic of interdependence, or a U.N. free at last of the artificial constraints of the cold war to make the world safe for multilateralists.

Given such confidence in a naturally emerging harmony, the kind of leadership that would be required of the United States would be largely inspirational, educational, exemplary and supportive, not one involving too much in the way of cracking the whip and making hard, unpleasant decisions. In the new era, it seemed that the National Endowment for Democracy would be a more vital instrument of foreign policy than the Marine Corps.

That was back then—five years ago, when the Berlin Wall was coming down and Francis Fukuyama was presenting the thesis that made him famous among the elites. The world that confronts us today is not the one that was announced in the program and shown in the preview. Words like "chaos" and "anarchy" are freely used to describe it. The global killing rate is well up to the cold war average, perhaps considerably beyond it. The proliferation of nuclear weapons and other methods of mass destruction is rapidly slipping out of control. In different parts of the world the democratic process is returning ex-Communists, religious fanatics and know-nothing populists. A vicious nationalism has reappeared. "Visions" have changed: "the Clash of Civiliza-

Owen Harries is the editor of *The National Interest.*

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

All "A's" Are Not Equal

Are poor youngsters being victimized by grade inflation? That's what a recent U.S. Department of Education study says. It finds that a large percentage of students in high-poverty schools receive much better grades than the low achievement levels in these schools would lead us to expect. Some people have taken this as yet another instance of how poor children are shortchanged by our education system. But is that the case?

According to the study, "What Do Student Grades Mean? Differences Across Schools," the C has fallen into general disuse. More than two-thirds of all eighth graders report that they received mostly A's and B's in the previous two years. Eighth graders in high-poverty schools (where over 75 percent of students are eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch) are less likely to get mostly A's, but a high percentage report getting mostly B's—38 percent in English and 32 percent in math.

But all A's (and B's) are not equal. Researchers found that these grades represent a lower level of achievement in high-poverty schools than elsewhere: Youngsters "who received mostly A's in English got about the same reading score [on external tests] as did the C and D students in the most affluent schools." Results were similar when math scores on external tests and math grades given by the students' teachers were compared.

In other words, an A does not mean the same thing in a school in South L.A. as it does in a wealthy school district like Scarsdale, New York. But is this news? And would it be desirable if the grades students took home matched perfectly with their standardized test scores?

People already know that the same grade can signify different levels of effort and achievement. That's what they mean when they describe a teacher as a "hard marker" or talk about a school with a "tough" grading policy. An A always represents superior achievement and an F, failure, but the superiority and failure are relative to the school and the classroom and perhaps even a student's own past achievement. And whatever the Department of Education study suggests, this is not a bad thing.

Suppose we were able to assign universal values to grades...

Suppose we were able to assign universal values to grades and make sure that teachers went along with them. There would be schools where all the students would get failing grades—perhaps in every subject—and other schools where they'd all get mostly A's. Undoubtedly, the first result of standardized grades would be the threat of litigation. The people who now say that giving high grades to students in high-poverty schools is a sign of low expectations—and evidence of racism—would say the same thing about a disproportionate number of failing grades. But even leaving this threat aside, would making sure that A always meant the same thing be fair—or useful?

Grades are important as incentives. What would happen in the schools where students are so far behind that they would probably flunk no matter what they did? Would a kid be likely to work if failure were guaranteed? And what about the schools where most of the students could expect to get A's? When I was a student at Stuyvesant High School, I could have gotten 100 percent on my Regents exams and still gotten a 75 from my classroom teachers because I failed to live up to Stuyvesant standards in other respects. If grades had followed a universal standard, my incentive to work would have disappeared.

Under the current system, a grade takes a lot into account that you can't measure with a standardized test. It shows where the teacher thinks a kid stands in relation to other kids in the class and the school. It reflects certain things that the teacher considers important over and above the mastery of the material—like how hard the youngster tried, how much he improved and how much he added to the class by the questions he asked and the discussions he sparked. And because a grade has more behind it than a standardized test score, it can be a richer and more discriminating measure of what a student has achieved.

Am I saying that external measures are not important? No—just that they are not the only way of measuring student achievement. As the Department of Education study points out, you need them so parents and colleges and employers know where a youngster stands in terms of the whole universe of students. That's the kind of thing standardized tests—like the ACT or the Advanced Placement exams—are suited for. But it doesn't destroy the need for the relative standards.

If the Department of Education believes that the only fair grades are standardized ones, they should say so and we can start determining students' grades by standardized test scores. I doubt that they—or anybody else—would be ready to live with that.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1994 by Albert Shanker.

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tions" and "The Coming Anarchy" have replaced "The End of History" as the fashionable concepts.

True, just recently, the panel of the "Inside Washington" talk show was still expressing its unanimous agreement that the United States is the "sole remaining superpower." But it was doing so in the context of the horrors of Rwanda and to assert America's unwelcome but inescapable humanitarian responsibility in that heart of darkness, not to claim a brave new world shaped by Washington, Wall Street and Silicon Valley. And it clearly did so without any great confidence that the United States could bring off even this urgent but very limited operation without mishap and embarrassment.

For there is almost universal agreement that, just as the international scene is depressing, so is the recent and current American foreign policy performance abysmal. The reprieve on Haiti has not altered this underlying judgment. The administration is, by common consent, characterized by chronic vacillation, an inability to strike a course and stick to it without running for cover at the first hint of trouble (Bosnia, Somalia, Haiti); by an unprecedented laxness in the use of language, so that what normally would be solemn commitments amount to no more than passing thoughts (Clinton, on virtually any issue); by an inability to establish and then respect priorities, so that directly conflicting ends are pursued simultaneously (singling out China for harsh treatment on human rights, while at the same time pleading for Chinese help in dealing with North Korea); and by the reckless dissipation of credibility and prestige. (With predictable results. In a recent speech delivered in Beijing, for example, the prime minister of Malaysia, ostensibly a friendly country, sneered at American military power: "It takes only one soldier to be killed before the whole force will be withdrawn.") Above all, there is none of the "vision" and "global leadership" that was supposed to characterize the new age.

Hardly anyone disagrees with this litany of charges. Conservatives view it with a mixture of dismay and satisfaction, as their patriotism fights with partisanship. Liberals either vent their anger and disappointment or try to change the subject. In between, there is much sighing and shaking of heads.

Abroad, leading newspapers and journals use strong language, on this occasion expressing not the customary resentment of American presumption and pressure but uncomplicated contempt: "simply embarrassing," "congenitally feeble" (*The Economist*); "soft as putty" (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Munich); "a real disaster" (*L'Express*, Paris); "idiotic" (*The Independent*)—and so on, in sufficient quantity for the Heritage Foundation to have no trouble at all in compiling a ten-page anthology of foreign abuse.

To say again, it wasn't meant to be like this. And the fact that it is calls for some explanation, for the sake of salvaging reputations as well as for understanding. The temptation, scarcely resisted, is to blame it all on the Clinton administration.

This has a lot going for it. First, as the Clinton administration not only is undoubtedly incompetent but also looks incompetent, it is persuasive. The president's nervous blustering, the sad-clown face of Warren Christopher (lit from below by the glow from some dazzling ties) and Anthony Lake's virtuoso impersonation of the Invisible Man add up to the least convincing foreign policy team in living memory. Second, it is a reassuring explanation. For if everything is the fault of a sub-par president and a bunch of poor appointees, it is temporary and can be fixed with comparative ease. It is an explanation that distracts us from contemplating more uncomfortable possibilities, ones that might cast doubt on very deeply held convictions. Third, it is convenient, because it confirms the basic assumptions made by many after the fall of the Soviet Union: that, as the "sole remaining superpower," it was the United States that would shape the post-Communist world. If that was a valid assumption, the fact that the world is going to hell in a handbasket must be our (i.e., Clinton's) doing.

When an explanation is as easy and appealing as this one is, it is worth looking at closely and critically. How bad, really, is Clinton's foreign policy? Is it bad enough to carry the weight of responsibility for the deteriorating state of the world that is thrust upon it? I think not. In fact, I believe that it deserves a kind of Wagner's music defense: it is not anything like as bad as it sounds when virtually all its critics chant in unison: "Somalia—Bosnia—Haiti—China—Korea—[and now] Cuba," which is just about all that many of them have been doing. Clinton's foreign policy is not an unmitigated disaster. It is not even a mitigated disaster. It is merely quite bad in certain ways that have limited consequences.

To say that these ways mainly have to do with style, implementation and articulation of policy is not to downgrade their significance but simply to characterize them properly. The sending of a force off-shore of Port-au-Prince when no decision had been made to invade; the use of rhetoric that systematically exaggerated the toughness of the U.S. position on MFN status for China, or that erroneously conveyed a determination to end the arms embargo in Bosnia—the way that policies are presented and put into effect is very important, and the Clinton team's failures in this respect have both cost it dearly and done some damage to America's interests, especially its prestige.

But that having been said, in terms of substance, the central policies followed by this administration mostly have been sound, or (since their ultimate outcome is not yet known) at least reasonable and defensible. On what may be the single most important policy issue facing the United States—that of dealing with the successor states to the Soviet Union—the "Russia first" approach adopted has the great merit of respecting both the reality of power and Churchill's maxim, "In victory, magnanimity"—a maxim that is particularly appropriate when the country in question has been badly humbled but still retains enormous military power. The Clinton administration has stood firm on a policy of supporting the democratic experiment and Yeltsin, and of giving Russia

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some latitude in dealing with its "near abroad." It has done so despite some high-powered criticism and dire predictions (so far not borne out by events) that democracy in Russia is bound to degenerate into nationalistic extremism, and that acceptance of a sphere of influence is bound to be merely a preliminary to the restoration of Greater Russia. To have done otherwise surely would have doomed from the start the chances of Russia's becoming a normal state.

On the related and important question of expanding NATO eastward, Clinton has uncharacteristically but properly resisted strong political and emotional pressure. Such an expansion could not be justified in terms of America's national interest (something that was implicitly conceded by Vaclav Havel, the most passionate pleader in its favor, when he urged the United States to rise above national interest in this instance). It could not be justified in terms of the substantial cuts the United States was making in its defense establishment. It could not be justified in terms of a clear and present danger to the proposed new members. And it could not be justified in terms of any demonstrated willingness or capacity on the part of other NATO members to take on sweeping and potentially dangerous obligations. Indeed, after their pathetic performance with respect to Bosnia, the idea of their doing so was intrinsically silly. (If Clinton's resisting of pressure was uncharacteristic, his subsequent undermining of a good decision with the ambiguous "Partnership for Peace" arrangement and his lighthearted promise that full membership of NATO will be granted soon are sadly very much in character. But given his way with promises, one should not rush to exaggerate the damage.)

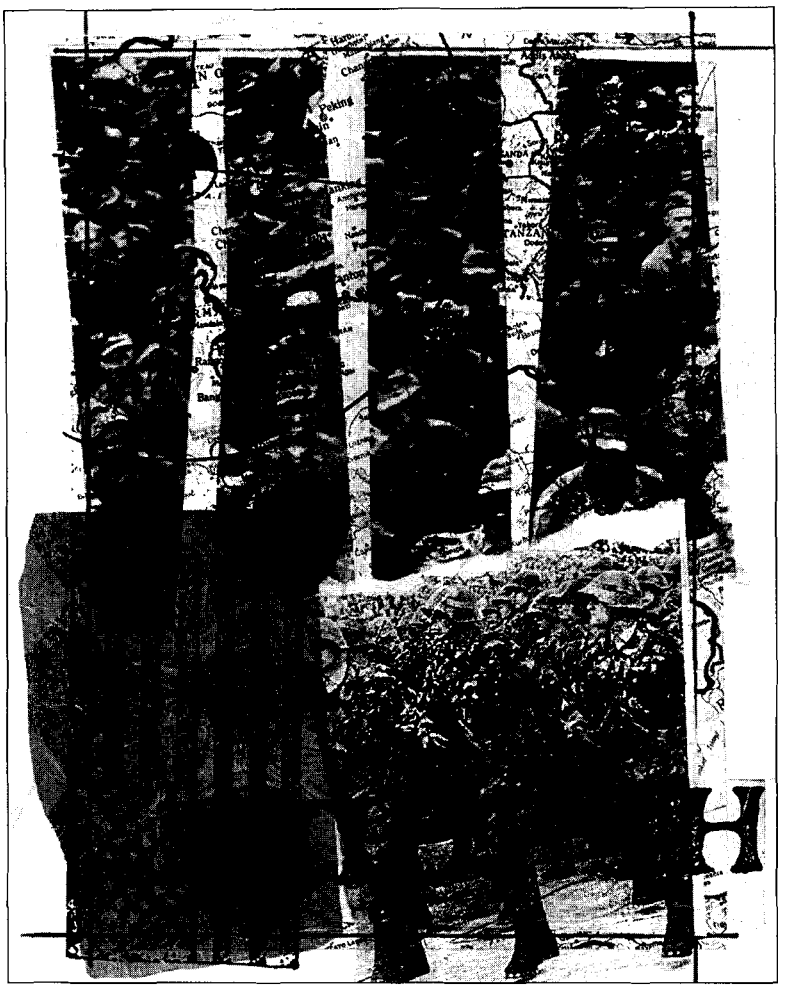

ILLUSTRATION BY TOM PRESTON FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The critics of Clinton's NATO policies, notably Henry Kissinger, have spoken of the need to infuse the alliance with "a new sense of direction" and "more meaningful common purposes." But as Kissinger also rightly points out, NATO is designed to defend its members from outside threats, not to provide political therapy or to protect members from each other. In the absence of such credible external threats, it is difficult to see what can provide that new impetus. It is only in the presence of immediate and deadly danger that trans-Atlantic solidarity has been forged and maintained in the past. With no such danger, and with the United States allowing its defense establishment to run down, Clinton has probably done as much as is possible or desirable to keep NATO alive.

This pattern of a basically sound initial policy being needlessly compromised for political reasons is repeated elsewhere. In the case of Bosnia, the terrible carnage, and its vivid and relentless exposure on American television, presented the Clinton administration with an agonizingly difficult problem. To the extent that the suffering there, in the heart of Europe, was considered morally different in kind from equal or even greater suffering in more peripheral parts of the world, or that the "falling domino" argument advanced by some serious people (Bosnia—Kosovo—Macedonia—a general Balkan war—great power involvement ...) was found convincing, the case for American involvement strengthened. To the extent that the moral calculus appeared ambiguous, or that the conflict was seen as involving no clash of great power interests (thus rendering invalid comparisons with earlier historical episodes in the region), or that this was seen as an appropriate opportunity to allow the major European powers to assume responsibility for their own backyard, the case weakened. I believe the administration has been right not to intervene in a serious way, because such an intervention would have had to be so large and so protracted (more than 300,000 men for ten to twenty years, calculated Gen. William Odom, one of the best-informed and most honest supporters of American involvement) that it never could have been justified in terms of American interests. But I would have understood a decision that went the other way. What has been inexcusable, and what has tarnished the basic policy, has been the mixture of posturing, agonizing and bluster that the president and his

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spokesmen have indulged themselves in subsequently.

Again, in the case of China, a self-indulgent and discriminating human rights policy (much harsher than that adopted toward, say, Saudi Arabia or Syria) has not in the last resort been allowed to disrupt a full, normal relationship and rapidly expanding trade. In the case of the Middle East, whatever view is held concerning the wisdom of the course adopted by Israel and however things may play out ultimately, the performance of the Clinton administration has been competent and professional—certainly no worse than the American par for that particular course.

The issue of North Korean nuclear weapons is important, but it is also difficult. It presents the familiar but unsolved problem of how to deal with the fanatic who carries a vial of nitroglycerine around in his pocket. As the "stunted little chemist" in Conrad's *The Secret Agent* explained, "What is effective is the belief those people have in my will to use the means. That's their impression. It is absolute. Therefore I am deadly." Clinton's people have not yet been able to crack the problem. But one would proceed to criticize them with more enthusiasm if someone could explain convincingly how it should be done.

Together with considerable successes in the area of international trade—the passage of NAFTA, the negotiation of GATT—all of the above amounts to a reasonable record. The charge against the Clinton administration has been that it is all show and no substance. But the opposite may be nearer the mark: the show has been terrible, but beyond the pratfalls, the ham acting and the lousy production, some sensible decisions have been made and some dangers avoided. It could have been a lot worse, particularly if the advice given by many of the people now criticizing Clinton had been followed—advice that would have resulted in American troops fighting in the Balkans; in U.S.-Chinese (and possibly U.S.-Russian) relations being put in cold storage; and in the United States intervening up to its neck in the internal affairs of a variety of countries, in the name of "exporting democracy."

There is another way of interpreting what has gone wrong in America's post-cold war performance. It involves seeing Clintonism, in its foreign policy form, not just as an aberration resulting from the shortcomings of a few individuals but as a precursor, a sign of things to come. For the incompetence, itself beyond question, works to obscure and disguise something much more serious: a combination of old habits and new inhibitions that, as long as it lasts, virtually guarantees the recurrence on a regular basis of the kind of fiascos and embarrassments (not necessarily terribly damaging ones) that we have experienced in the last year and a half. In this sense, it might be said, Clintonism preceded Clinton and was clearly evident during George Bush's last year. Unless there is a drastic change in the way Americans think about foreign policy, it is also likely to outlast Clinton.

What we are witnessing is, I believe, a structural—or cultural—incompetence, arising out of a flawed view of the world and of America's power and interests. American confidence and optimism are an invaluable source of strength in times of adversity. In times of triumph they can be a handicap. As the Soviet Union disintegrated, many normally thoughtful Americans, and not least conservatives, experienced a rush of blood to the head and entered a state of Wordsworthian bliss. They surrendered to the euphoria of victory, bereft of any protective imagination of disaster and impatient of any suggestion of limitation or caution.

An indication of the extent of this surrender is that two of the most striking examples of it were provided by the country's leading conservative columnists, George Will and William Safire. In the fall of 1989 Will scathingly dismissed those who argued the case for giving serious consideration to maintaining some stability in the midst of the turmoil of that year: "Enough of the worship of stability and of 'gradual' progress toward justice long denied." Only the Soviet Union had a stake in "stability," he insisted (though even that stake was not to last for long). Safire followed not long after with a piece titled "Hail to Unpredictability," asserting that "stability" had now replaced "peace" as the excuse of the appeasers of tyranny. These essays accurately reflected the excitement of the times, but they were strikingly free of that concern for the danger of unintended consequences that has traditionally characterized conservative thinking about turmoil.

The idea that best expressed this early euphoric sense of no limits was that of the universal triumph of liberal democracy. But as the deep troubles of the CIS states became evident, as disillusionment set in in Central Europe, as China and other Asian states resisted American urging to take the democratic path forthwith, and as even the established democracies of Western Europe began to look sickly and uncertain, the vision of a triumphant progress toward a democratic world faded. But "vision" has remained one of the key terms in discussion of America's foreign policy in the new era, along with "global leadership" and "sole remaining superpower." These three terms repay close examination.

What is striking about the first two is the disembodied, contentless quality they have assumed. In the case of "vision," the demand has been not for this or that particular sense of purpose and destination but for vision in the abstract—for any grand picture of a future. Bush perfectly reflected the character of this American yearning by advancing the concept of a "New World Order"—and then failing to give it any content whatsoever. The very notion of a vision-driven foreign policy, carrying the assumption of a grand end-state to be achieved—rather than the sense of an endless process driven only by proximate and provisional objectives—is questionable. Michael Oakeshott has given classic expression to that second approach in a celebrated passage:

> In political activity, then, men sail a boundless and bottomless sea; there is neither harbour for shelter nor floor for anchorage, neither starting-place nor appointed destination. The

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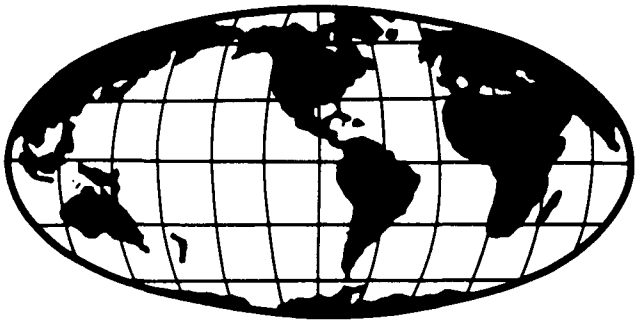

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enterprise is to keep afloat on an even keel; the sea is both friend and enemy; and the seamanship consists in using the resources of a traditional manner of behavior in order to make a friend of every hostile occasion.

This may be too austere and bleak a view for most American tastes, but it should raise the question of whether something more modest and adaptable than a "vision"—say, a set of sensible middle-range objectives (call them interests)—might provide a more appropriate basis for policy in a fragmented and pluralist world. Similarly, in the call for "leadership," what has been demanded is not American leadership to achieve this or that specific goal—as, say, it was exercised to achieve victory in World War II, or survival and containment of communism in the cold war—but simply for the United States to demonstrate that it is in charge and running the show. This stress on being in charge, on behaving as if everyone's business is America's business and the world cannot go on without an assertion of U.S. will, indicates how ingrained the cold war habit of being out in front is by now. It suggests that, despite complaints about the burden it imposes and the freeloading of others, segments of the American elite have become more enamored of their country's role as leader than they admit—or perhaps realize. Anyone who questions that role, or suggests that it need not involve intervention everywhere and always, runs a serious risk of being characterized as a neoisolationist.

Such characterizations are often based on the belief—which I recently heard articulated by someone who held a responsible position in government in the 1980s—that the United States is only capable of functioning abroad in two modes, "full on" or "full off," so that any rejection of the former is taken as an endorsement of the latter. This is surely an utterly unjustified extrapolation of the experience of the interwar years, when the country was much less globally integrated (culturally and materially) than it is now. There is very little evidence in contemporary America of a desire to pull up the drawbridge and withdraw from the world. What there is—and it should surely be welcomed—is evidence of a reordering of priorities to require more deliberation and discrimination before becoming heavily engaged.

Like the first two terms, the third—"sole remaining superpower"—reflects a cold war cast of mind. On the face of it, it may appear to be simply an unobjectionable description of fact. There were two superpowers during the cold war, one of them collapsed, so there is one and only one remaining, right? Not really. For one thing, the phrase is rarely used as merely a flat statement of fact. Nearly always it is used in a prescriptive context, carrying with it the assumption of special prerogatives, special responsibilities and special interests. It is intimately linked with the whole global leadership business.

More important, the very idea of a "sole remaining superpower" amounts to a contradiction in terms. The superpower game is a relational one, not solitaire, and it takes at least two to play it. If you have two superpowers and you take one away, what is left is something less than a superpower. For being a superpower involves more than having certain capacities in the abstract, certain potentials (if it did not, after all, the United States would have been a superpower as long ago as the 1920s). It involves being fully energized, motivated and focused to mobilize and deploy these capabilities and potentials—and it's very unlikely that a state can achieve that condition without the galvanizing presence of at least one rival superpower, to provide the needed sense of urgency and danger. The United States has ceased to be a superpower, not because it has "declined" but because its circumstances and its interests no longer require or permit it to be one.

To expect or demand that that same level of activism be maintained in the post-cold war era is to doom oneself to disappointment and the kind of embarrassment resulting from the wide discrepancy between posture and performance—between old habits and new inhibitions—that has come to be associated with Clintonism. Patterns of thought and behavior that developed over the four decades of the cold war persist and are deeply ingrained. They involve basing policy on the assumptions that everything counts and nothing is irrelevant; that American leadership is always and everywhere required; that American institutions and ideas are universally valid. But these habits are now being challenged and balanced by countervailing concerns.

Several inhibitions now prevent the United States from behaving consistently in the manner of the sole superpower it believes itself to be. One is the political impossibility of subordinating domestic policy to foreign policy as was routine as long as we were confronting the evil empire. It is not only the so-called isolationists of left and right who have called for an alteration of priorities in favor of domestic affairs but also tough-minded foreign policy specialists such as Jeane Kirkpatrick ("The time when Americans should bear such unusual burdens is past. With 'normal' times, we can again become a normal nation") and William Hyland ("What is desperately required is a psychological turn inward").

A second inhibition operates against the resort to the unilateral use of force—*the* mark, one would have thought, of superpowerdom. Everything now, even the invasion of Haiti, requires multilateral cover, for democracy must be exported not only to individual countries but to the international state system itself. In the eyes of many Americans, the test of the virtue and legitimacy of a policy is no longer to be found in its substance but in the process by which it has been adopted—and, specifically, whether it has or has not been endorsed by a U.N. majority.

A third, and by far the most novel and limiting inhibition operating on the United States—and to varying degrees on most European countries, including Russia—is that against taking large numbers of casualties to further foreign policy objectives other than sheer survival. Perhaps, as Edward Luttwak has suggested, it is the result of the greater value placed on young lives in the

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West because of smaller families and the fewer early deaths that have followed the great medical advances of the past fifty years. Or perhaps it is because of the cumulative effect of the wars fought by Western countries in this century, the way they have progressively leached nationalism and patriotism of their appeal. James Kurth recently has related the reluctance to fight to the abandonment of loyalty to the Western civilization of the Enlightenment:

> Among liberals, the political energy is now found among multicultural activists. Liberalism is ceasing to be modern and is becoming postmodern. Among conservatives, the political energy is now found among religious believers. Conservatism is ceasing to be modern and is becoming premodern. Neither these liberals nor these conservatives are believers in Western civilization.... A question thus arises about who, in the United States of the future, will still believe in Western civilization. Most practically, who will believe in it enough to fight, kill and die for it in a clash of civilizations?

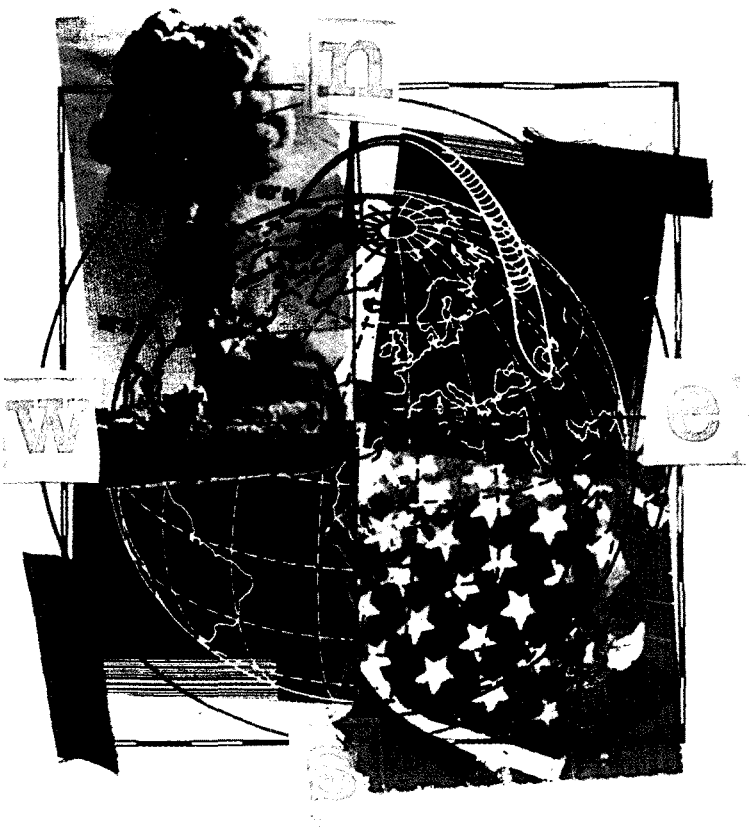

ILLUSTRATION BY TOM PRESTON FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Whatever the explanation, an extreme reluctance to take large casualties, and an unprecedented sensitivity to even very modest ones (as in Somalia), must be balanced against America's military might and must cast serious doubt on the validity of the concept of "sole remaining superpower" and many of the assumptions accompanying it.

The most important and ironic consequence of Clintonism is that it has laid the ground for the reintroduction of a sense of realism in American foreign policy. For forty years the cold war imposed such a sense. When that struggle ended, so did the discipline it fostered. Now the president's indifference and inattentiveness, the fact that foreign policy is the only sphere of government in which he does not have large ambitions and the blundering mediocrity of his foreign policy team are combining to bring back a sense of limits and caution. It is overdue.

The American impulse to promote freedom and democracy in the world is a noble and powerful one, not to be casually ridiculed or dismissed. Acting on it is a complicated and delicate business. Success requires that this impulse be balanced against, and often circumscribed by, other interests that the United States must necessarily pursue—more mundane ones like security, order and prosperity. Success requires, too, an awareness of the intractability of a world that does not exist merely to satisfy American expectations—a world that for the most part cannot satisfy those expectations in the near future. While determination and purposefulness are important ingredients in any effective policy, the attempt to force history by an exercise of will is likely to produce more unintended than intended consequences.

Such observations and precepts may appear banal, and indeed in a sense they are. But politics, including international politics, is a banal business. When Walter Lippmann maintained that "without the controlling principle that the nation must maintain its objectives and its power in equilibrium, its purposes within its means and its means equal to its purposes, its commitments related to its resources and its resources adequate to its commitments, it is impossible to think about foreign policy," he was being banal.

Critics of realism claim that it is alien and inappropriate to the American tradition and temperament. It is neither. Far from realism's being alien, the United States was founded, initially led, and expanded to its full dimension by realists. And far from being inappropriate, the very strength of American idealism and optimism make it highly desirable that they be supplemented and balanced by the prudence and respect for what is the case that realism provides. This is especially true at a time when, superficially, anything looks possible for the United States. It was, after all, not Hans Morgenthau but George Washington who said, "No nation is to be trusted further than it is bound by its interests." It is on the basis of such banal truths that a sound foreign policy is constructed. Bereft of "vision," preoccupied with his domestic agenda and equipped with too uncertain a trumpet for forceful international leadership, Bill Clinton may, however inelegantly and inadvertently, be performing the valuable service of backing the United States toward those banal truths. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Truth or Consequences

In the radio days of the mid-1940s Dan Enright was a producer and Jack Barry an announcer at WOR in New York. I was then doing some things of my own for that station, got to know Dan and Jack a bit and liked Dan especially. My road soon diverged from theirs, but I read much about how they had formed their own production company, had entered T.V. and were zooming ahead with successful game shows.

In 1956 Enright and Barry launched one more show, *Twenty-One*. It was a hit. When Charles Van Doren became, and continued as, its winning contestant, the show went through the roof. Van Doren, crown prince of a distinguished intellectual family, became both national cynosure and sex symbol. So unaffectedly knowledgeable, such a nice young guy. Then, around the end of the year, the scandal broke. *Twenty-One* was rigged. Van Doren, like other contestants before him, had been coached and prepared every week.

This was the second time that people I knew were involved in malodorous matters. Several years earlier my literary agent's husband, who was her partner, had been imprisoned for stealing a famous author's funds. But I hadn't liked that man. I had liked Dan Enright and was therefore more shocked. I remember that even then I relished the naïveté of my criterion.

Now Robert Redford has directed a film about the *Twenty-One* scandal, **Quiz Show** (Buena Vista), with a screenplay by Paul Attanasio, former film critic of *The Washington Post*. The story is an obvious exemplum of defective ethics, and Redford-Attanasio miss no chance to rotate it before our eyes. Redford says that this scandal marked the end of an age of innocence in American history. I wonder how many times that comment has been made—before Edith Wharton and right up to the present. America has lost its virginity more often than any other nation ever. Still losing it.

But the *Twenty-One* affair had one distinction: class. The public wasn't much shocked by or concerned about Enright and Barry. But Van Doren was a Columbia University teacher of English, the son of Mark Van Doren, professor and Pulitzer poet, and Dorothy Van Doren, critic and editor, and was the nephew of Carl Van Doren, Pulitzer biographer. All that tweed! All that implicit ivy! It was a sordid *trahison des clercs*. Charles Van Doren's moiling in the muck was a Lilliputian analogy with the Hiss case of the 1940s, a wound in the side of superiority.

Redford's film captures the period atmosphere. (Note that all the male Columbia students wear neckties.) The film does especially well with Herbert Stempel, Van Doren's predecessor as champ, an earnest—and Jewish—Joe Average who was forced to lose to the patrician because the producers wanted the ivy type on the air. It's Stempel's vindictive anger that fuels Richard Goodwin, the young lawyer investigating the show for a congressional committee. (Some facts admittedly have been compressed.)

Cinematically, Redford directed briskly, but, small surprise, his best work was with his actors. Pace, bite, color keep the story crackling. Ralph Fiennes, the Nazi chieftain of *Schindler's List*, here uses a good American accent as Charles Van Doren and has the right air of bemused collaboration. Paul Scofield, also with American accent, is absolutely perfect as his father. (Listen to the way Scofield speaks one particular line to his son: "Something on your mind?") David Paymer has Enright's energy but not his appeal; Christopher McDonald comes closer to Barry. John Turturro does Stempel to a turn, and Rob Morrow gets some clever swagger into Goodwin. (A chapter from a book by Goodwin supplied material for the film.)

Attanasio's screenplay has some electric charge, but it's condemned to an inescapable flaw. In the public's view at the time, the unfolding of the *Twenty-One* story was suspenseful. *Was* the show crooked? *Had* Van Doren cheated? No such suspense in the film. Attanasio had no choice but to start on the inside, with the cooking of the conspiracy: so we know all along about the scam. The only suspense is whether or when Van Doren will crack. Which he does before the congressional committee.

Before that committee Enright testifies that neither the sponsor (Geritol) nor the network (NBC) knew of the rigging. Thus he shields both of those parties from further inquiries, and thus he ensures that, after a proper period of penance, he and Barry can return to T.V. Which, in fact, they did, successfully. As for Van Doren, he retreated to private

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Barcelona. *Whit Stillman's bright, pointed comedy about two post-preppies living abroad. (Reviewed 8/15/94)* **Clear and Present Danger.** *Political intrigue, with a decor of action. A war on Colombian drug lords is maneuvered to help a U.S. president's re-election. (9/19&26/94)* **Eat Drink Man Woman.** *A Taiwanese comedy about eating, drinking and love. Dozens of succulent dishes are surrounded by some less succulent stories. (9/5/94)* **Natural Born Killers.** *Oliver Stone's explosion of styles and furies. A murderous pair slaughter their way through the Southwest and, later, out of prison—right into the American psyche. A terrifying achievement that scalds the media, including the film itself, and their creatures: us. (10/3/94)*—**SK**

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life in Connecticut, where he still lives and works.

And what did America learn from the *Twenty-One* episode? The answer is quite clear. The basic lesson of the episode is that there is nothing America likes better than basic lessons. Nothing makes our blood tingle like an exposure of misbehavior in high places. Then, after some remarks about the end of innocence, some sense of purge and refreshment, we continue as before.

Princess Caraboo (TriStar) is that nice old-fashioned thing, a tale—in this case a tale worth telling and here told endearingly. The story is said to be true—most of it, anyway. In the rural England of 1817 a young woman suddenly appears, wearing some kind of Asian dress, speaking a strange language, ignorant of English. She has beauty and dignity, and after some crude mishandling, she is virtually adopted by a wealthy couple. A few of her words are, somewhat fortuitously, understood, conveying that her father in their far-off land is a king.

A journalist named John Gutch, from nearby Bristol, becomes fascinated by her and investigates her possible background. While he is doing this, she wins many hearts, including his, and even dances with the Prince Regent at a grand ball.

Such variations on the Kaspar Hauser story are not rare, but this one is treated with grace and wit. Phoebe Cates plays the princess with easy stateliness and charm. Stephen Rea has quizzical warmth as Gutch. (There was such a man, who, as shown, was Coleridge's Bristol publisher. But the ending of Gutch's story here is fictional.) Jim Beaumont is fitly John Bullish as the rich man who befriends Caraboo, and Wendy Hughes, the beautiful Australian actress admired ever since *My Brilliant Career*, is enchanting as his generous aristocratic wife. A bonus is the appearance of Kevin Kline, Cates's husband, as the Greek butler in the rich house—a fair sample of Kline's ability to render comic intelligence in physical terms.

The screenplay by Michael Austin and John Wells is articulate, well-built. Austin has directed with command of period style and fluent action. Two other elements are exceptional. The cinematography by Freddie Francis, who did *Glory*, is superb. No calendar art: Francis uses lighting to present faces and places with painterly regard yet without lush color. We're completely convinced. Then there are the costumes by Tom Rand, who did *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *The Shooting Party*. The women's dresses are exquisite, their hats breathtaking, but

From the bestselling author of *The Politics of Rich and Poor*

An attack on Washington that's political dynamite —with a fuse, a match, and lighting instructions

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Arrogant Capital

WASHINGTON, WALL STREET, AND THE FRUSTRATION OF AMERICAN POLITICS

KEVIN PHILLIPS

Washington—top-heavy with politicians, mired in bureaucracy, manipulated by Wall Street, and overrun with lobbyists and lawyers—has become what Thomas Jefferson feared: a swollen capital feeding off the country it should be governing. Political prophet Kevin Phillips explains how democracy has given way to entrenched power, and sounds a cry for purge and renewal with a variety of remedies—some quasi-revolutionary, others more moderate, but all sure to be controversial.

"A blistering jeremiad that gives new vibrancy to the political cliché that Washington is out of touch with the average American. . . . Phillips is a brilliant reader of the political tea leaves."—starred, *Kirkus Reviews*

"Nobody has been as transcendentally right about the outlines of American political change as Kevin Phillips."—*New York Times Book Review*

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these might almost be expected, ungrateful though that may sound. The simpler clothes, Gutch's workaday clothes, for instance, smack of their time in fabric and cut.

If *Princess Caraboo* were less entertaining, it would be worth a visit just to look at it and to listen to those actors. But the look and the sound are used to tell a very pleasant story. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

In the Company of Women

John Fuegi's **Brecht and Company** (Grove/Atlantic, 732 pp., $32.50) is a work of massive scholarship and deep rage. It is a rigorously researched, densely written and generally complete account of the life of one of the great masters of the modern stage. It is also a frantic and furious effort to deny Brecht the authorship of most of his works. I think Fuegi has plotted at least three different books here—a detailed biography of a hugely influential poet and playwright, a compelling history of the ghastly times in which he lived and a revenge play featuring all the women whose love he betrayed and whose talents he exploited. Only two of these books are documented objectively. The third has an agenda that is convincing in part but finally too sweeping and speculative. For all its compendiousness, *Brecht and Company* tells us less about Bertolt Brecht and his ideological times than about John Fuegi and *his* ideological times.

Fuegi, who founded the International Brecht Society and edited fourteen volumes of its proceedings, clearly detests the man to whom he has committed his life. He reminds us a little of Chekhov's Vanya who, after years of slavish devotion, finally perceives that his idol, Professor Serebryakov, is a charlatan. There is hardly a page of this biography that does not deliver some fundamental judgment on the fraudulence and loathsomeness of Brecht's character. And while any number of witnesses have testified that Brecht was a horrid human being, I am not certain that the moral nature of a creative artist is all that central to an evaluation of his work. Eric Bentley's comparison of Brecht with Shaw's Dubedat in *The Doctor's Dilemma* ("a scoundrel but an artist") seems to me a more illuminating way to understand this playwright than Fuegi's constant harumphing about his immoral conduct. And as a matter of curious fact, the author does not seem very interested in the artistic side of Brecht. Full of detail about his life (and thefts), the book is thin and sketchy regarding his plays. Fuegi's exploration of Brecht's creative work is limited to its sexual themes, and then only as a means of determining how much he stole from his women collaborators. It is as if the endemic journalistic fashion of ruining public figures by exposing their erotic adventures has now entered the realm of literary scholarship.

The diary of this scoundrel nevertheless makes for compelling reading, especially since he performed on a historical stage where the most horrible events of the twentieth century were also played: World War I, the collapse of the Weimar Republic, the rise of Nazism, the Reichstag fire, the Spanish Civil War, Stalinist labor camps, the Moscow trials, the Holocaust, World War II and later the considerably less harrowing but still oppressive pall of McCarthyism and the HUAC inquisitions. (All of these events are described by Fuegi in scrupulous detail.)

Born into a middle-class Augsburg family in 1898, Brecht was conducting five simultaneous love affairs by the age of 18, and never thereafter was he involved with fewer than three women at a time. Like his character Mackie Messer, he was capable of simultaneous marriage proposals and multiple impregnations, while continuing to declare undying love for all. Fuegi fully documents the "omnivorous sexuality" of this Bavarian Don Juan and his lifelong dependence on (and contempt for) female lovers. Although Brecht's most intense early affairs were with men (as reflected in his youthful poems and plays), he was not averse to attacking homosexuals when it suited his purposes. He called the poet Rilke's way of dealing with God "wholly faggot" (the German insult Brecht used was *schwul*) and, in order to undermine the reputation of Thomas Mann, he circulated his own homosexual sonnets under Mann's name.

Politically, Brecht was also inconsistent. In his youth, he behaved with cool indifference to the revolutionary movements of the day, contemptuous of Bolshevism and apathetic toward the Spartacist revolution that formed the background for *Drums in the Night*. Fuegi hints that Brecht, who occasionally expressed anti-Semitic sentiments, had a more natural affinity with the Nazis than with the Soviets. More than one witness has compared his screaming and raving to Hitler's.

Nevertheless, it was to communism that Brecht finally committed himself, and whatever his private reservations about the development of Stalinist totalitarianism, and despite the fact that one of his ex-mistresses (Carola Neher) was exterminated in a Soviet camp, this allegiance was total, at least in public. Fleeing from the Nazis with his second wife, Helene Weigel, their two children, and his current mistress, he went first to Denmark, then to Finland and finally to the United States where he worked on movie scripts and an ill-fated production of *Galileo* until he ran afoul of the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1947. After giving specious testimony that won the congratulations of the committee at a time when less wily witnesses were naming names or taking the Fifth or going to prison for contempt, Brecht escaped to East Germany and founded the Berliner Ensemble. There he became rich and famous by remaining reticent and cautious, a theatrical radical who never stuck out his neck, even during the East Berlin uprising and the Hungarian Revolution. In a concluding passage, Fuegi lists Brecht's unattractive contradictions: "master and child; a wealthy man who compulsively represents himself as poor; a Communist who mercilessly exploits those around him; a man who denigrates women and then proudly presents their work under his own name."

It is this last charge on which Fuegi's book will eventually stand or fall, for it is the leitmotiv that plays through its 700 pages. In fact, one of the reasons for the book's inordinate length is that, along with his life of Brecht, Fuegi has submitted biographies of the three women he claims had written Brecht's plays: Elisabeth Hauptmann, Margarete Steffin and Ruth Berlau. These three hapless mistresses, along with other women who play a less important contributory role, represent the "company" of the title. And if we are to believe Fuegi, they are responsible for the major share of all his published writings—without credit, without royalties, without gratitude, without a place in history.

Where Fuegi's conspiracy theory fails

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to convince is in explaining why these women chose to remain silent for so many years, and more importantly, how so many different hands could have created such a unique and individual style. To answer the first question, Fuegi cites contemporary victimology. The women were all too mesmerized by Brecht's charismatic appeal, or too sunk in traditional roles, to claim their proper due. Fuegi believes that, as a dramatist, Brecht, along with Molière and Chekhov, comes first after Shakespeare, but he nevertheless insists that, aside from a few poems and perhaps the early plays, his brilliant body of work was written by a woman's conglomerate with Brecht marketing and publicizing the women's unacknowledged labors under his own name. Seeking analogies, the author cites Virginia Woolf's famous essay, "A Room of One's Own," in which she imagines an equally gifted sister of Shakespeare prevented by the mores of her time from realizing her gifts. "If 'Shakespeare's sisters,' to use Virginia Woolf's formulation, wrote much of the works," Fuegi concludes, "why should not women everywhere be able to draw strength from the free and open acknowledgement of that fact?" The sentiment is warm, but the analogy is weak. It suggests the kind of leaps in logic the author makes throughout the book. Woolf never suggested that Shakespeare's fictive sister wrote *Macbeth* and *King Lear*. A more accurate comparison would have been with Colette, who allowed her husband, Monsieur Willy, to take credit for much of her work.

Fuegi's evidence is partially external—interviews with people in the Brecht circle and latter-day testimony by some of the ghost-writing women. Hauptmann, for example, dropping her "usual classical ... understatement," is quoted as saying: "Up until thirty-three I either wrote or wrote down most of the poems," while claiming in a 1970 interview that "her contribution to the *Lehrstücke* was as high as 80 percent." While one has less difficulty conceding her contributions to such frozen and flavorless ideological pieces as *Der Jasager* ("The Yeasayer") and *Die Massnahme* ("The Measures Taken"), there is a big difference between the creative act of writing and the stenographic act of writing down. Fuegi nevertheless insists that instead of inflating her role, "she radically understated the source and magnitude of her contributions."

The reason for Fuegi's confidence seems to be largely internal, based on Elisabeth Hauptmann's knowledge of languages that Brecht couldn't read. His claim, for example, that Hauptmann wrote "at least 80 percent" of *The Threepenny Opera* is mostly derived from the fact that she knew enough English to translate John Gay's *Beggar's Opera* (its eighteenth-century source) along with the Kipling ballad that informs the "Cannon Song." What Fuegi fails to understand is that Brecht, like any artist, might have exploited Hauptmann's translations for his own purposes, adapting them to his own distinctive idiom. *The Threepenny Opera* is not simply a translation of *The Beggar's Opera*. Stylistically, it is a whole new work.

But Fuegi is less interested in examining style than in reading sexual politics into the plays. Assigning almost everything else in *The Threepenny Opera* to Hauptmann, Fuegi allows Brecht, discounting a few "nips and tucks," only a single lyric, "Mack the Knife," because of its "strictly male orientation." But the most telling evidence for Brecht's authorship of *The Threepenny Opera* is something Fuegi cites as proof of Hauptmann's authorship, namely her contribution to *Happy End*. Originally attributed to a magazine story by a fictitious American named "Dorothy Lane," with lyrics and music credited to Brecht and Weill, the book of *Happy End* clearly was written by Hauptmann—and just as clearly represents the work of an inferior dramatist. Although Fuegi calls it "a superb creation," which would have been "a great success, a kind of second *Threepenny Opera*," had it not been "sabotaged" by Brecht and by Helene Weigel's inflammatory curtain speech, *Happy End* is a very poor piece of writing. Lotte Lenya found it too mediocre to be performed in America, though it contained some of her husband Kurt Weill's finest songs. Only when Michael Feingold submitted a radical reworking of the clumsy text did Lenya allow the Yale company that I directed at the time to do the premiere, and still the book could not match the power of the lyrics.

Even these lyrics Fuegi denies Brecht. "Weill and Brecht were credited with the songs," he writes, "though several of them bear the usual traces of being more Hauptmann than Brecht texts"—namely, English words and kind feelings toward women. Weill, on the other hand, is allowed to have composed his own songs because he is "consistently considerate of the difficult role of women in male-dominated societies." This bizarre criterion is used throughout as the yardstick Fuegi brandishes to determine authorship. *Saint Joan of the Stockyards*, for example, belongs to Hauptmann because a "typical central character in Hauptmann's work cares about other people, puts her own life on the line, and works to change the world for the better." His other reason is that the play is set in Chicago, like Hauptmann's *Happy End*, as if Brecht didn't first use the Chicago setting in *In the Jungle of Cities*. A more persuasive argument for Hauptmann's authorship of *Saint Joan* (though Fuegi fails to mention it) is that, as in *Happy End*, the play's Salvation Army heroine is appropriated from *Major Barbara*. If Brecht and Company includes Elizabeth Hauptmann, Hauptmann and Company would have to include George Bernard Shaw.

Not only are we to believe that Hauptmann wrote all of Brecht's Berlin plays (and many of his poems), but in Fuegi's view, Steffin and Berlau wrote most of the plays in exile. Yet the sections that Fuegi quotes from Steffin's rather gushing diary make no mention of her literary contributions, aside from serving as Brecht's stenographer and typist, while the plays she composed under her own name are far from distinguished. Once again, Fuegi's reason for assigning work to female pens is that some scenes treat women kindly or some characters display tender feelings—notably the mute Kattrin in *Mother Courage*, whose personal heroism "reflects the values of Steffin and Berlau."

As for *Visions of Simone Machard*, "the young woman's straightforward and successful heroism is highly unusual in the Brecht canon," so it must have been written by Berlau. And the texts of *The Good Woman of Setzuan* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* must be Steffin's since they feature "a strong woman seeking to do good in a world that demands evil." (Only the Groucho Marx-like comic Azdak is attributed to Brecht and only because, in Fuegi's view, he is guilty of "sexual harassment.") Fuegi finds Brecht's plays "filled with males beyond the law, men who deny their feelings and preach a philosophy of hierarchy, control and dominance.... Nowhere is there a strong, caring and committed adult male in an enduring relationship with either a female or a child."

Although he uses this feminist language throughout, it is only at the end of the book that Fuegi declares his underlying feminist theme:

> Should people in future years still be asking the question, Where were the woman dramatists of world rank in the first half of the twentieth century, point them under the mask of the brutal male "lover" Shui Ta, at the hidden face of the woman who loves him despite his brutality, Shen Te in *The Good Woman of Setzuan*. Or, having heard the boasting of murderer, rapist, racist Mack the Knife, we can urge people to listen to words sung "in a different voice," the voices of Hauptmann's Polly and Jenny as they dream of a tomorrow when women are recognized in their own right, no longer brutalized and silenced by Mackie and his kind.

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If what you are looking for in literature is confirmation of Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice*, then it goes without saying that Brecht will never satisfy you—nor for that matter will most major writers. But the notion that the "brutal," "masculine" Brecht of *Baal* and *In the Jungle of Cities* was incapable of writing tender female characters is tantamount to charging that the misogynistic, domineering Strindberg of *The Father* and *Miss Julie* could not have composed *A Dream Play* or *The Ghost Sonata* because they feature compassionate heroines. Great artists rarely conform to our efforts to classify them; they are always in development. Brecht's mind was dialectical, and the violent surface of his plays was usually tempered by inner controls—early on by rational constraints and later by a Confucian calm (something Steffin found "enormously reactionary" because of Confucius's indifference to women's rights).

I have no doubt that Brecht stole ideas, themes, characters and even plots from all of his collaborators, including other playwrights, lovers, wives, patrons, actors, designers, composers, stenographers and typists. "In literature as in life," he once wrote, "I do not recognize the concept of private property." I believe that Fuegi is correct in saying he should have shared his private property with all of those who helped him. But the distribution of royalties is hardly the same thing as the disintegration of authorship. Works of art are not completed by committees, and however much Hauptmann, Steffin or Berlau may have suffered from Brecht's voracious plundering, I remain unconvinced that they could all have mastered the singular style of his greatest work.

Brecht's gifts were, I believe, as much directorial as authorial, and like most *auteurs*, he was accustomed to cannibalizing others' talents to suit his own stage purposes. Not just *The Threepenny Opera* but virtually all of Brecht's plays are adaptations from other literatures, and adaptations are always a form of theft. On the other hand, no matter how it developed and changed throughout the years, the bulk of his writing (the *Lehrstücke* and a few minor pieces excepted) bears the stylistic imprint of a unique and idiosyncratic artist.

And no matter how detestably he behaved toward the people who loved him, he remains a pivotal figure in modern drama. Certainly, Brecht is not a man you would have chosen to share a meal with or a weekend in the country. He was selfish, vain, promiscuous and unscrupulous. His politics were hateful and he smelled bad. He threw in his lot with the totalitarians and sometimes used his poetry to validate oppression. But he also was supremely gifted. To drop Brecht down an Orwellian memory hole because of sexist behavior, as Fuegi does, is to be complicit in the charge Fuegi accurately makes against his subject, that simplistic politics sometimes drives his work. Obviously, twentieth-century ideologies come in many shapes and flavors. Subtitled *Sex, Politics, and the Making of the Modern Drama*, Fuegi's study is better described under the subtitle *Sexual Politics and the Remaking of the Modern Drama*. For all its scholarly paraphernalia, this angry biography, which could have been definitive, will probably find less prominence on the shelves of theater scholars than on the coffee tables of politically correct revisionists. •

Beauty and the Best

By Robert Alter

The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages by Harold Bloom

(Harcourt Brace, 578 pp., $29.95)

Of all the catchwords that have been used to dull the edge of thought in academic life, none has done more damage than the term "canon." Bootlegged into literary studies from ecclesiastical history, it has planted in susceptible minds a powerful and misleading suggestion that a kind of invisible synod of cultural ideologues through the ages—inevitably dead, white, European and male—has passed judgment on what is to be read and what is not, on what works are to occupy the vital center of literary tradition and what works are to remain at the margins. The ecclesiastical analogy effectively has served the current academic dogma that everything is political: Western culture is imagined as a structure held together by a set of doctrines devised to perpetuate power, like a church, and so it is chiefly considerations of class, economic interests, gender, race and ethnicity that determine what is canonical. The notion of intrinsic literary value thus is dismissed as naïve at best, and in many instances as no more than a cynical mystification.

Harold Bloom's new book does not quarrel with the use of the term "canon," but in all other respects it is a vigorous criticism, devastating and salutary, of current academic pieties about the canon. Bloom performs an immense service in his unabashed and shrewd counter-attack on the contemporary pieties that would substitute the political for the aesthetic, and level literature with rap lyrics and the soaps. "I am your true Marxist critic," he announces in his first chapter and then repeats in his last, "following Groucho rather than Karl, and take as my motto Groucho's grand proclamation, 'Whatever is, I'm against it.'" We surely need a spirited and deeply literate oppositionalism to rescue literature from the new political puritans.

Bloom's ambitious project has two large aims: to define the nature of the canonical, and to invoke its panoramic sweep through discussions of twenty-seven major writers from Dante to Beckett, with Shakespeare the constant radiant center of the whole historical system. As a definer of the canonical, Bloom is an unflinching and engaging polemicist, and he proposes several key notions that are likely to have lasting value; yet there is also something one-sided in the way he sees literature. As a critical guide to master writers, he is decidedly uneven. The evident impulse to make this book the capstone of his career as a critic may have led Bloom to overreach. After all, is there any living critic who can be truly interesting and instructive on as wide a range of writers as Chaucer, Dante, Goethe, Ibsen, Virginia Woolf, Neruda, Borges? Bloom is best on poets: his chapters on Shakespeare, Milton, Whitman and Dickinson abound in keen insights, and he has fine things to say also about Samuel Johnson, perhaps by virtue of a certain affinity in critical posture and sensibility.

The logic of writing a book about the canon leads you to celebrate each writer in turn as an instance of dazzling achievement that is in some way unprecedented. The trick is to hit upon the cinching formula for greatness in each case, and there are too many chapters here that turn upon a single reductive or even truistic observation: George

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Eliot is very intelligent; Proust is the supreme authority on sexual obsession and jealousy; Don Quixote and Sancho Panza represent a "fusion of folly and wisdom"; and so forth. Bloom might have made his case more effectively, and produced a trimmer book, had he conceived his argument topically or thematically, according to aspects of canonicity. The author-by-author approach, driven by his desire to propose a personal summation of the entire Western tradition, and perhaps also by imagined market considerations, leads to many disappointments, even with writers on whom one would expect Bloom to shine, such as Kafka and Joyce. But it is pointless to linger over the unevenness of *The Western Canon*. Its abiding importance lies in the notions it frames of how the canonical comes about and what purposes it serves in our cultural lives. These notions richly deserve reflection.

Bloom's guiding principle is that writers, not critics or professors or cultural ideologues, make canons. Thus the proponents of what Bloom contemptuously refers to as the School of Resentment—feminists, multiculturalists, anticolonialists, New Historicists—put the cart before the ungifted horse when they try to make a new canon by curricular fiat. "One breaks into the canon only by aesthetic strength," Bloom insists, "which is constituted primarily of an amalgam: mastery of figurative language, originality, cognitive power, knowledge, exuberance." The professed sympathy of the intelligentsia for the wretched of the earth, he goes on to suggest, is a misguided motive for seeking value in literary expression: "The final injustice of historical injustice is that it does not necessarily endow its victims with anything except a sense of their victimization."

How does a writer get into the canon? In Bloom's plausible view, he barges his way in through sheer imaginative energy and wholly unanticipated resourcefulness with words, ideas and the formal dimensions of his medium. Thus Faulkner takes the language of the King James Version, the baroque eloquence of Burton and Browne, Southern oratory and vernacular, Joyce's interior monologue and Conrad's impressionist restructuring of narrative, and creates *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!*, novels unlike anything that had preceded them, which for their haunting visionary power and psychological insight and crazy stylistic gorgeousness will be read long after the contrived imitations of Toni Morrison have been forgotten. (The examples are mine, not Bloom's.) "All canons," Bloom wisely concludes, "including our currently fashionable counter-canons, are elitist, and as no secular canon is ever closed, what is now acclaimed as 'opening up the canon' is a strictly redundant operation."

Elsewhere, repeatedly and persuasively, Bloom proposes that what often enables a writer to force open a place in the canon is a quality of "strangeness that refuses domestication" in the writing. Flaubert (like a number of other major French writers, barely mentioned by Bloom) produced a powerful strangeness by fusing beautifully crafted lyricism with icy clinical precision in the representation of a flat and futile social reality. And if, after admiring Flaubert, you wish to become a canonical writer of fiction, you must make your own strangeness out of his commanding technical precedent, as Ford Madox Ford did in the mesmerizing emotional weirdness and temporal shuttling of *The Good Soldier*, or as Isaac Babel did in the finely etched imagery and the masterly economy of his short stories.

"The true work of canonization," Bloom concludes, "is carried on by the perpetual agon between past and present." One of the chief critical strengths of *The Western Canon* is that it is the most convincing exposition of

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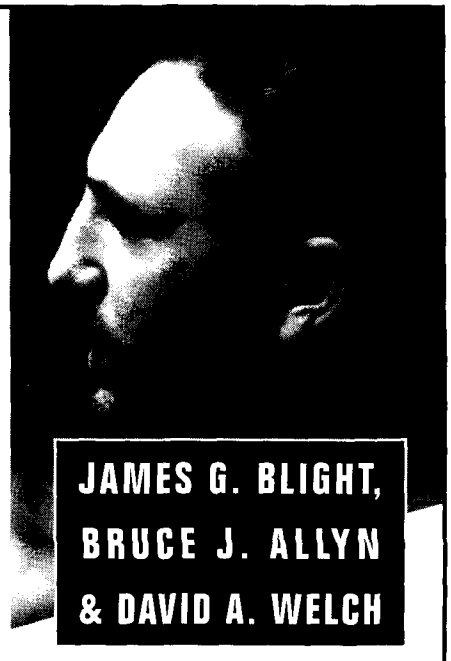
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the theory of "the anxiety of influence" that Bloom has been expounding in volume after volume since 1973, when he published his influential book by that title. Shakespeare is the centerpiece of this exposition. Shakespeare drew on Chaucer, Montaigne and (at least according to Bloom) the Yahwist of the Hebrew Bible in his representations of humanity; but he was able to make a seemingly effortless leap to a whole new order of originality that has set the terms for Western literature ever since and actually has determined the way we think about ourselves. With an uncanny rightness, he was able to give each character an absolutely individual voice, to show profoundly how people change in the wash of experience and, above all, to represent the individual talking to himself, as we all now do in the wake of Shakespeare's plays, as he works out his destiny.

To claim that such imaginative authority is the product of social contexts, the ideology of British imperialism or any other external determinant is, Bloom argues, to conjure with the most transparent absurdities: "If 'social energies' wrote *King Lear* and *Hamlet*, why exactly were social energies more productive in the son of the Stratford artisan than in the burly bricklayer Ben Jonson?" In Bloom's dismissive view, it is social resentment that fuels the American followers of Foucault and makes them intolerant of any high achievement that cannot be explained as a reflex of social context or ideology: "Originality is the great scandal that resentment cannot accommodate, and Shakespeare remains the most original writer we will know."

This account of the canonical as the assertion of originality is worked into a historical schema. Assessing its accuracy is tricky because all large periodizations are in part arbitrary, and the ones here, moreover, are capped by a series of more or less apocalyptic prophecies about the new age we are about to enter. Loosely inspired by Vico, Bloom sketches out an Aristocratic Age that runs from Dante to Goethe, a Democratic Age from Wordsworth to Ibsen, and a Chaotic Age that essentially brackets high Modernism with the contemporary scene. (This last label strikes me as merely an omnium-gatherum. The Anarchic Age, a political designation like the ones that precede it, would be more precise.) This scheme enables Bloom to make Wordsworth the font of all modern poetry, a judgment about which I have serious misgivings. A more Continental perspective might argue at least as persuasively for Baudelaire (who is utterly absent from Bloom's pages) as the point of departure for modern poetry, and surely other constellations and other periodizations are possible.

What overshadows all the divisions into periods is Bloom's sense that we are, a scant six years from the millennium, slouching toward a grim new Bethlehem. The next era, he contends, will be the Theocratic Age. It is not entirely clear whether the theocrats that he envisions are proponents of an actual religious fundamentalism or the true-believing acolytes of the cult of resentment who are, in his view, taking over our universities and reducing literature departments to departments of cultural studies "where Batman comics, Mormon theme parks, television and rock will replace Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, and Wallace Stevens." Under the new theocrats, in any case, there will be no room for a real canon, no tolerance for the very inwardness and solitude upon which the experience of reading is predicated.

In this gloomy perspective, Bloom refers several times to his account of the Western canon as an "elegy," or imagines that the preservation of the canon will devolve upon a small elite, what the biblical tradition calls (though Bloom does not invoke the term) the saving remnant. I am not sure that we have the power to read the future with Bloom's confidence. My experience as a teacher is that there are still many twentysomethings who, with some pedagogical encouragement, are ready to become passionate readers of Melville, Joyce, Proust and the Bible; and though the minions of resentment may have taken over many professional apparatuses—witness the annual program of the Modern Language Association—there are still substantial numbers of people impelled by a love of literature who are teaching it in our institutions of higher learning.

Still, if Bloom is inclined to sound elegiac about the Western tradition, representing himself as "a belated acolyte of that waning faith ... the worship of art," he has too much high-spirited feistiness as a polemicist to surrender entirely to this twilight mood. He is certain that canonical literature is too precious a possession not to be saved, and that it can be saved. After quoting Emily Dickinson's terrifically compacted "The Tint I cannot take," he characteristically observes, "But this is a very difficult poem, as tough as it is distinguished, and it will yield only to a preternaturally close reading, not to ideology or polemical zeal, however benign in social purpose." Again, at the end of his Dante chapter, which celebrates the extravagant assertion of poetic personality in Dante's making Beatrice the key of a personal mythology, he concludes: "At our present bad moment, we need above all to recover our sense of literary individuality and of poetic autonomy. Dante, like Shakespeare, is an ultimate resource for that recovery, provided we can evade the Sirens that sing to us the allegory of the theologians."

Bloom's great virtue as a critic is to see that reading is an intricate engagement in the stubborn peculiarity of the individual writer, not a dovetailing of the writer with some general theory or formula: Dante cannot be read adequately as a translation of Augustine, or Proust as a translation of Bergson (though elsewhere Bloom himself has evinced a disposition to read most major American poets from Whitman onward as versions of Emerson). In any case, Bloom is especially, and justifiably, vehement when a schema is imposed ideologically on a writer, like imperialism on Shakespeare or high capitalism on Joyce. But why, after all, should we feel any urgent need to read canonical works? Bloom's answer to this fundamental question is extremely interesting, though it does not seem to me altogether sufficient. He repeatedly invokes the category of the aesthetic and the idea of "the autonomy of the aesthetic."

The genuineness of Bloom's excitement about the achieved beauty of literature is scarcely in doubt. But he has a rather special sense of what constitutes the aesthetic, and this sense omits, or at best elides, some essential aspects of the very category that he wants to promote. What the aesthetic ultimately means for Bloom is not the articulation of beauty, but the amplification of selfhood: "The reception of aesthetic power enables us to learn how to talk to ourselves and how to endure ourselves." The verb "endure" may seem a harsh choice, but it is a just one: as Bloom makes clear later in the book, each of us must live with the private consciousness of his or her own weakness and inner contradictions, with the inexorable limits of physical frailty, aging and mortality. Talking to ourselves colors consciousness, which is the human vehicle for life in culture, but it does not necessarily change for the better what happens in the world. "If we read the Western Canon in order to form our social, political, or personal moral values, I firmly believe we will become monsters of selfishness and exploitation."

There is an element of polemical provocation in such assertions. Is it not

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possible that the experience, say, of reading Stendhal and Proust might make one a more subtly aware moral agent? But the monstrous selfishness follows directly from Bloom's conception of literature as a theater for the assertion of the self. Literature, in this view, addresses "the sovereignty of the solitary soul, the reader not as a person in society but as the deep self, our ultimate inwardness."

One can easily see why Bloom is so much better as a critic of poetry than of the novel, where the deep selves of protagonist, writer and reader are all seen in the immensely complicating contexts of social institution (Proust would be the supreme instance of this double perspective). Having invoked ultimate inwardness, Bloom puts in place what has been the cornerstone of his vision of literature for the past two decades: "That depth of inwardness in a strong writer constitutes the strength that wards off the massive weight of past achievement, lest every originality be crushed before it becomes manifest."

It is hard to escape the conclusion that this is a personal obsession elevated to the status of a universal principle of literary creation. Bloom's framing of the issue, as often has been noted, is tinged with the notion of Oedipal struggle, but it is, more crucially, mythological in character. It holds literature to be a clash of titans, in which fierce energy must be exerted by the writer in order to resist the crushing weight of the achievements of his forebears. (In 1971 Walter Jackson Bate published a quietly descriptive account of the transition from Neoclassic to Romantic, *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet*; and much of Bloom's work is a stepping-up of Bate's argument into a mythological register, with the burden converted into a kind of juggernaut.) There certainly are writers who have been actuated by this "anxiety of influence," and Bloom is especially instructive on those figures. He has illuminating things to say about Milton's need to contend with, assimilate and transform Shakespeare. He is also quite suggestive, and original, in proposing that Freud was impelled to circumvent Shakespeare as a precursor, substituting Oedipus for Hamlet in laying out his theory, because Shakespeare had in effect pre-empted psychoanalysis in his understanding of human nature. Despite the extravagance of this claim, it is an exaggeration that has the virtue of compelling one to reconsider received ideas about Freud and the literary tradition.

But the notion of literature as a relentless process of resisting and absorbing influences leads Bloom to rather fanciful pronouncements and skewed emphases: "It may be that Chaucer's true literary parent was the Yahwist and his true child, Jane Austen." Literature is conceived by Bloom as a chain of biblical begats. Of the most un-Goethean of German writers, Bloom can assert, "In terms of literary influence, Goethe was the Abraham from whom Kafka shrank." Joyce's canonicity is defined almost entirely in terms of his relation to Shakespeare, which surely leaves out most of what is compelling and delighting in *Ulysses*. One can say, as Bloom does, that the Wife of Bath begat Falstaff and, in turn, that both—this is not a lineage he actually pursues—begat Molly Bloom, with perhaps a little help from Moll Flanders. The identification of such filiation, however, isolates a tertiary aspect, not a primary one, of Joyce's novel. It certainly cannot explain why Molly's soliloquy is one of the most brilliant pieces of sustained writing in English of the past 100 years, nor does it in the least demonstrate that Joyce was struggling with his predecessors or anxious about influences when he ended his novel with this lovely, lyrical, witty, bawdy, touching prose-poem.

Bloom's understanding of the power of literature is invigorating, in our moment of ideological self-righteousness, but it exhibits serious deficiencies. For all its emphasis on literary genealogies, it reflects a rather inadequate sense of literary tradition. Where everything is mortal combat, there can be no real tra-

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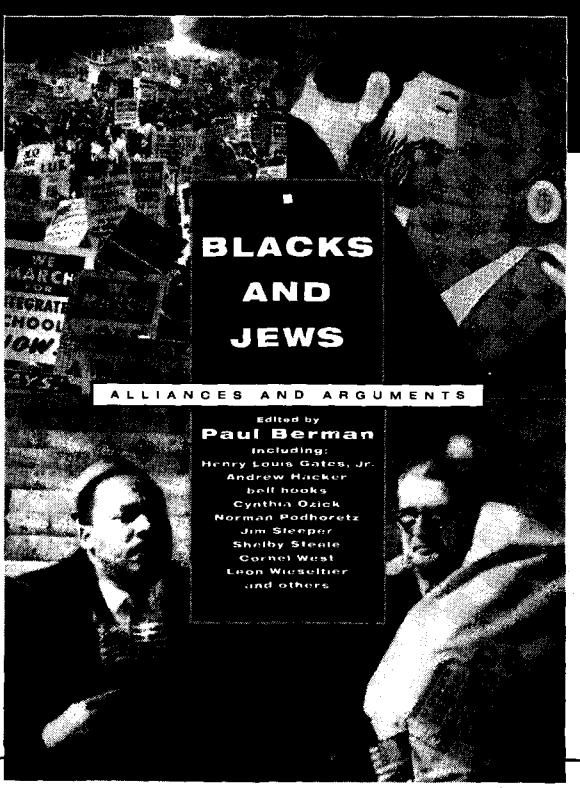

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dition. In fact, Bloom has observed somewhere that tradition is merely the mask of continuity worn by rebellion. This is shrewd and throws light on certain phenomona—for example, the Kabbalah and its relation to rabbinic Judaism, as Gershom Scholem demonstrated long before Bloom—but it is also gravely exaggerated. Tradition, etymologically and conceptually, is a handing-down, and there surely have been canonical writers of both poetry and prose who have been perfectly comfortable to join in the chain of tradition so conceived. I don't mean to suggest that they did not want to make a difference in their writing, that they were unconcerned with originality. But writing may be understood to be craft as well as creation (that is an understanding shared by figures as different as Ben Jonson and Henry James), and the elements of a craft are transmissible, with neither anguish nor shame attached to the process of transmission.

Many writers, in other words, have been able to view their literary antecedents not as an overwhelming challenge or a crushing weight, but as a body of vivid resources to be exploited, reconfigured, happily transformed. But Bloom consistently imagines the psychology of the writer in terms of the assertion of will: "If you are an artist, you suffer your vocation's peculiar augmentation of the will to live, a craving for recognition initially and ultimately for immortality." If the name of the game really is the will to immortality, as it may well have been for poets like Dante, Milton, Blake and Goethe, then you are in fact doomed to a titanic struggle with the giants on the earth who came before you. But surely there are other motives for writing, and they range from the desire for filthy lucre to the pleasure in doing the thing itself to the impulse to delight readers, and several of these motives lend themselves to a more craftsmanlike or a more relaxed attitude toward the activity, less electrically focused on matters of life and death.

A writer may be somehow interested in "immortality," but not as his or her overriding concern, or in the mode of fiercely concerted will for which Bloom argues. Stendhal had aspirations to be a great writer from early adolescence. He noted in his journal that to write was to take a lottery ticket with posterity, but there is not much evidence that he was tormented with anxiety lest he lose the lottery, and he often appeared to assume that might be likely. He wrote in a manner that pleased himself (which was not a manner in which anyone else was writing at the time), and he wrote continually because it pleased him immensely to do so. He wrote travel books, biographies, autobiography, music criticism, journalism and, in due course, with terrific speed, surely not anguished at every paragraph about whether he was displacing his precursors, two of the masterworks of European fiction. (In a Stendhalian fusion of candor and self-irony, the very canonical Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai once told me that he wrote because he wanted his readers to love him, which is a much warmer and more intimate thing than Bloom's insatiable will, and holds well back of the aspiration to transcend mortality.)

The canonicity of all the writers discussed by Bloom is defined almost exclusively in terms of their original solution to expressing the problematics of selfhood. Shakespeare represents the inner language of the changing self; Johnson embodies a brave assertion of vitality in the face of the gloomy prospect of mortality; Montaigne discovered "the truth that the self is passage or transition"; Emily Dickinson made poetry into the medium of a new and demanding mode of cognition that grappled with the intractable givens of human limitation and mortality. Thinking of writers in this framework leads Bloom to valuable ideas, but much of importance is left out.

The most salient foreshortening in Bloom's account of the Western canon is his peculiar marginalization of comedy. There is no consideration of Boccaccio alongside Chaucer or Dante, nothing more than a passing mention of Rabelais (whom Bakhtin made to figure persuasively as the point of departure for *his* canon) or of Fielding, Sterne, Diderot, Gogol, Mark Twain. As for the three patently comic writers included in Bloom's own canon—Chaucer, Cervantes and Molière—the word "comedy" is duly invoked in his discussions, but there is very little sense of the comic genius of any of the three. What is playful, witty and exuberantly funny in these writers vanishes under the weight of sober reflections on selfhood, self-representation and will.

Thus Bloom's strategy in treating Molière is to concentrate on Alceste in *The Misanthrope*, the most ambiguous figure of his darkest play. He proceeds to define Molière's achievement in terms that have everything to do with self and volition, nothing to do with the playwright's comic virtuosity. "Molière shows the dark comedy of indulging the will, leading to self-abdication and destructive passion." Even Falstaff, an object of Bloom's passionate admiration, is described chiefly as an instance of the "psychology of mutability" and bracketed with Hamlet as one of literature's great self-overhearers. One may grant the importance of this perception and yet wonder what has happened to Falstaff the antic spirit, the outrageous affirmer of life, the advocate of gullet and gut, the extravagant player with words who, after being dunked in the river, can announce, "I have a kind of alacrity in sinking." Similarly, the focus on Joyce's "agon" with Shakespeare leads to an undue emphasis on the preciously self-conscious Stephen Dedalus and doesn't begin to suggest that *Ulysses* is one of the funniest novels in the English language.

The fact is that great writers, and not only those we conventionally describe as comic writers, often have a great deal of fun with their writing, because technical mastery and fecundity of invention have their intrinsic delights, and readers in turn implicitly are invited to participate in the high fun of the act of literary communication. Bloom is contradictory in this regard. He is a zestful, personally vivid, at times quite amusing writer, but his notion of reading canonical works is a little dour. He represents himself as a reader wrestling with all the formidable questions of inwardness—self and other, desire and frustration, stability and change, life and death—while he registers only the most intermittent and oblique recognition that reading is, among other things, a uniquely pleasurable activity.

Bloom's scanting of the comic is symptomatic of his blind side, but it is not the only symptom of it. Another instance of that scanting may be instructive. Bloom's discussion of Proust focuses exclusively on Proust's representation of sexual jealousy. The psychology of jealousy, of course, is one of Proust's great subjects, and no other novelist has catalogued so knowingly the finely honed instruments of what Proust called "the secret torture-chamber of the heart." Proust surely conjured up these images of passional suffering from the memories of his own anguish as a lover, but that did not prevent him from also representing on occasion both the jealous Swann and the narrator as figures of fun in the extravagance of their amatory obsessions. To reinvent as fiction what you have experienced is, in part, to escape from the prison-house of experience, to view it from outside with the bemused or amused superiority of a god. Thus Proust is at once an endlessly subtle guide to a modern hell and one

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of the great comic novelists; but the latter achievement is excluded entirely from Bloom's account. Snobbery, pretense, self-protective conformism, self-delusion are all pre-eminently comic traits. When Proust deploys the most brilliant caricaturist's art to render the evenings at the Verdurins, for example, he is manifestly reveling in the pleasure of his splendid ability to "do" the Verdurins in all the hilarity of their manners and gestures and highfalutin phoniness.

The pleasures of the comic overlap with the pleasures of the aesthetic, which, oddly, are not much in evidence in this book. I have no doubt that Bloom is deeply excited by Shakespeare's soaring poetry and the exquisite stylistic resourcefulness of Stevens, but his constant stress on literature as an agon of the self tilts his definition of canonicity heavily toward intrapsychic or cognitive truth and away from beauty. Bloom is altogether bracing in his criticism of the social utilitarianism that would deflect attention from literary masterworks to political agendas of reform. But his own understanding of the nature of reading has an ultimately utilitarian aspect, because in his view reading must constantly serve the ends of an enhanced inwardness. This is why his conception of the aesthetic is peculiar, for the aesthetic, whatever its determinants and its thematic concerns in representational art, should be an end in itself. This is the reason that the energies that animate comic exuberance and stylistic richness flow from a common reservoir, which is the reservoir of pure play. Bloom is himself sometimes charmingly playful as a critic, but he cannot admit an essential playfulness into his scheme of literary creation because that would compromise his model of eternal struggle between author and forebears.

What I am proposing is that literary works make their way into the canon not only because of their representational power or their illumination of human inwardness, but also because they constitute astonishingly beautiful constellations of words, never before so conjoined, and are therefore intoxicating to read, and induce in us a condition of elevated pleasure that we cannot experience elsewhere. One of the most memorable formulations of this perception is Nabokov's in his afterword to *Lolita* (a novel mentioned by Bloom only in the list of suggested readings printed as an appendix to his book): "For me a work of fiction exists only insofar as it affords what I shall bluntly call aesthetic bliss, that is, a sense of being somehow, somewhere connected with other states of being where art (curiosity, tenderness, kindness, ecstasy) is the norm."

It is striking that three of the four terms that Nabokov places in parentheses are moral terms; and yet the sympathetic moral imagination that they all reflect is a consequence of the disinterestedness of the aesthetic. To say that the aesthetic is an end in itself is not to say that it is autonomous or entirely disengaged from other orders of experience. On the contrary, there is a complex and unpredictable interchange between the free play of the aesthetic and the representational or thematic ends of literature. An elaborately wrought style coupled with a crude or simplistic sense of the represented world—a current American example would be the fiction of Cormac McCarthy—is a recipe for minor writing, for the sub-canonical.

Here, by contrast, is an example of the canonical power of beauty, of aesthetic bliss in the midst of psychological analysis. Proust's Swann is standing in the dark outside what he imagines is Odette's window (he is mistaken), trying to make out with whom she might be consorting in the lit room beyond the frame of the window with its pulled blinds, desperate to ascertain what "was to be read behind that window, streaked

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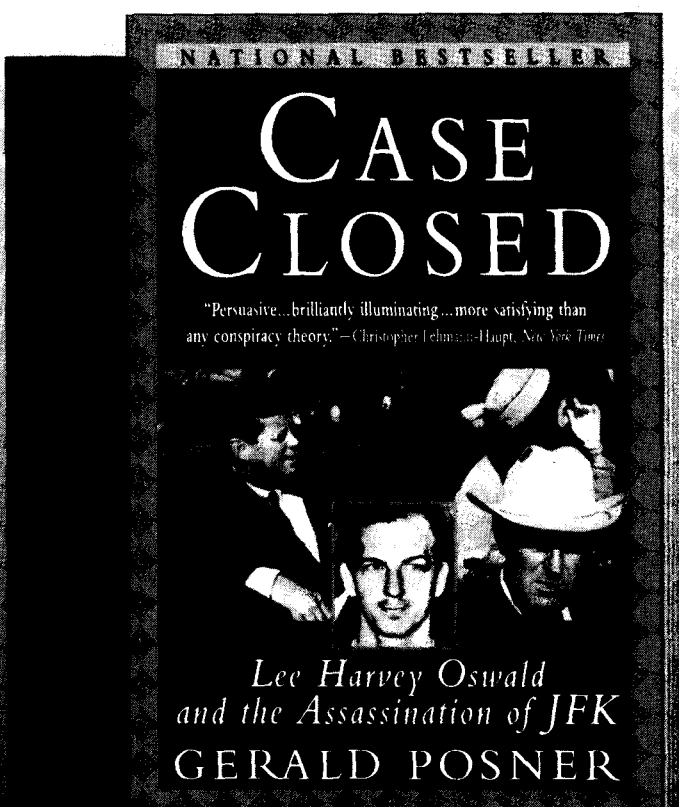
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with bars of light, as within the illuminated, golden boards of one of those precious manuscripts by whose artistic wealth itself the scholar who consults them cannot remain unmoved." As the representation of a moment of visual experience, this is a breathtaking image (more elegantly lovely, one must say, in the French than in the Moncrieff-Kilmartin translation that I have quoted): the consciousness of the man standing below in the dark, as the narrator interprets it, regards the barred illuminated rectangle above him as one might scrutinize an exquisitely illuminated medieval manuscript.

The comparison is at once surprising and visually precise, but the sheer beauty of the image also fuels a whole complicated series of moral ironies. Swann's stance in the dark is an archetypal Proustian location: the excluded lover reduced to a kind of futile and frustrating voyeurism. The image of the illuminated manuscript is right for Swann because he is, after all, a cultivated amateur of the fine arts, his head stocked with images of great paintings, the ambition to write a monograph on Vermeer always before him. Yet the disparity between the image and the thing it represents is also a vexed one. The kind of painstaking attention a scholar would lavish on antique vellum, on what might well be a sacred text, is here directed by a lover distraught with jealousy on a window, in which the scene he tries vainly to discover is likely to be a sordid one—except for the fact that he is looking at the wrong window.

I have chosen an example in which the exquisite display of the aesthetic is intricately involved in the moral definition of character. One need not insist, however, on thematic utility, as Bloom sometimes comes close to doing. The magical possibility of reconstituting the world in words is one of the abiding and deeply restorative satisfactions of living in a culture of words. At this moment, when language is flattened by the mass media, bloated and distorted by the sundry conformisms of the academy and constantly compromised by electronic imagery, it is a satisfaction we vitally need. Here, for example, is Humbert Humbert watching Lolita play tennis:

> My Lolita had a way of raising her bent left knee at the ample and springy start of the service cycle when there would develop and hang in the sun for a second a vital web of balance between toed foot, pristine armpit, burnished arm and far back-flung racket, as she smiled up with gleaming teeth at the small globe suspended so high in the zenith of the powerful and graceful cosmos she had created for the express purpose of falling upon it with a clean resounding crack of her golden whip.

This moment is not merely decorative, for the psychology of the observer remains that of the obsessed nympholept who does not fail to notice the lack of hair in the prepubescent Lolita's armpit, and who is driven by his constant ambiguous impulse to transform the object of his erotic fixation into poetry. Unlike the window and the illuminated manuscript in *Swann's Way*, however, no real point is made here other than the service-point. These lines are a celebration of the beauty and the power of mimesis, and the intricate sequence of motions that constitute a tennis serve are a daunting challenge to the novelist's mimetic art. The split-second of suspended movement before the snap-back of the serve—the crack of the golden whip that no one who has played tennis would want to reduce to a psychological theme—is wonderfully caught in globe and zenith and graceful cosmos, a momentary world of lived experience called up through the magnetic coherence of artful words. *This* is canonical writing, since no one else has ever done it this way or this well, as Bloom would rightly say, and because it will continue to give pleasure to readers as long as people still care about English words.

ROBERT ALTER is the author, among other books, of *The Pleasures of Reading in an Ideological Age* (Simon & Schuster) and *Hebrew and Modernity* (Indiana University Press).

The Original Power Couple

BY JOE KLEIN

No Ordinary Time Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II by Doris Kearns Goodwin

(Simon & Schuster, 759 pp., $30)

Searching for something useful to do in the autumn of 1941, Eleanor Roosevelt had herself appointed assistant director of the Office of Civil Defense. She thus became the first—and only, until the current White House—presidential spouse ever to hold an official, policy-making position in her husband's administration. She didn't hold it long. She resigned within four months, chased by Congress and columnists, an utter disaster. The nature of her failure is both familiar and instructive.

The mission of the Office of Civil Defense seemed straightforward enough. The First Lady's immediate superior, Fiorello LaGuardia, the mayor of New York, believed the first task was to prepare American cities for the possibility of enemy attack—to bolster fire departments, designate air raid shelters, organize evacuation teams and so forth. This strategy seemed particularly compelling in the weeks after Pearl Harbor, as rumors spread of an imminent Japanese raid on the west coast. But Mrs. Roosevelt had other plans. "To Eleanor's mind," Doris Kearns Goodwin writes in her exploration of the Roosevelt White House during World War II, "the stresses and dislocations of war—such as migration, unemployment, housing and health—were creating social problems as acute, if not so dramatic, as anything to be anticipated from bombing."

Real civil defense meant the pursuit of what was—and sometimes still is, among the politically nostalgic—called "social justice." America couldn't be strong abroad until it was strong at home. Mrs. Roosevelt wanted to use civil defense money to provide a job for every American who needed one, to build public housing, day-care centers, nursing homes. Somehow, the pursuit of social justice also involved hiring close friends—the actor Melvyn Douglas and the dancer Mayris Chaney, among others—as public morale boosters. (Douglas's salary was twice that of General Douglas MacArthur.) LaGuardia was aghast. So were the press and Congress, which banned the use of civil defense funds for "instruction in physical fitness by dancers," one of Mrs. Roosevelt's favored projects. The First Lady resigned soon after, having come "to the reluctant

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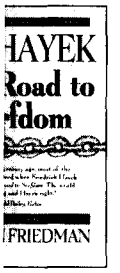

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—Thomas Sowell, Forbes, *cover story, January 1994*

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FDR selected Henry Wallace as his vice president in 1940, Goodwin gives no clue as to why Roosevelt was so insistent on Wallace in the first place, or why he dumped him in 1944—or who Henry Wallace was, for that matter.

Then again, who can blame her? There was so much going on upstairs, a Kama Sutra of sexual repression, a fantastic daisy chain of sublimated longings and liaisons. The domestic arrangements of the Roosevelt White House have been gleaned from patchwork accounts—memoirs and biographies—over time, but they never quite have been assembled before in all their Victorian splendor, or placed in the context of the great public drama that was unfolding. Goodwin describes the White House during the war years as "a small, intimate hotel," but that seems disingenuous, given all the fluttering eyelashes, quivering lips and galloping neurasthenia that she describes. The family quarters seem more an intricate, interlocking molecule of sexual radioactivity.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Each of the principals had live-in suitors of both sexes. The president had his devoted secretary, Missy LeHand, who lived on the third floor and "performed all the chores a housewife might do," from writing the president's checks to giving the children their allowances. She was hostess, confidante and who knows what else. Eleanor was too busy saving the world to enjoy the president's daily ceremonies of normality: cocktail hour, gossip, poker. Missy is spotted, from time to time, snuggled in the president's lap and emerging from his bedroom in her nightgown. Two of FDR's feckless sons, Elliot and James, would disagree in competing memoirs as to whether their father's romance with Missy was "familiar" or not. But, as Goodwin wisely observes of this and the many other yearnings in the family quarters: it hardly matters.

The intensity of the relationship, especially for Missy, was indisputable. The romantic tension eventually wore her down; Missy suffered a series of nervous breakdowns, and then strokes. She was out of action before Pearl Harbor, quickly replaced at cocktail hour by Princess Martha of Norway, who also took up residence in the White House for a time. Eventually FDR's daughter Anna became Missy's permanent replacement as unofficial White House hostess and executive secretary. Remarkably, and at her father's behest, Anna set up a series of surreptitious reunions for the president with his earliest extramarital consort, Lucy Mercer (who was at the president's side when he suffered his fatal stroke). "I realized mother was not capable of giving him this—just listening," Anna later explained. Eleanor had, by then, abandoned all pretense of connubiality. She was a political operative, pure and simple. She saw the president to lobby him for her causes, and not much more.

Missy LeHand's male counterpart was the remarkable Harry Hopkins, who was invited to stay at the White House the evening that Hitler moved into Western Europe in May 1940, and remained there in a second-floor bedroom suite for the next four years (until he married, to the president's evident displeasure, and moved out). Hopkins, according to the speechwriter Robert Sherwood, had an almost "feminine sensitivity" to the president's moods. Eleanor seemed more jealous of *him* than of Missy, or any of the other wife-surrogates. Hopkins, after all, had been her co-conspirator during the New Deal years, always weighing in with the president on the side of activism and compassion. Indeed, Eleanor was initially relieved that Hopkins had moved into the family quarters: like many of the more liberal New Dealers, the First Lady was something of an isolationist. She feared war would distract the president from the social agenda. Hopkins would keep FDR on track. "He was never interested in military affairs, and would stick with me no matter what happened," she believed.

She was wrong. Hopkins's first priority was to serve the president. A social worker by training and sensibility, he retooled himself for war and, once again, became Roosevelt's indispensable policy adviser, as well as his most favored drinking and dining companion. The First Lady was livid, doubly betrayed. "[The president] doesn't need my advice anymore," she told Labor Secretary Frances Perkins. "He doesn't ask it. Harry tells him everything he needs to know."

Poor Eleanor. But then, she had her own curious entourage. It seems quite probable that the First Lady was homosexual, though perhaps subliminally so. Goodwin argues—wisely, again—that there's no evidence that Eleanor ever went beyond a few comforting and confusing hugs and smooches with Lorena Hickock, the ace A.P. reporter who loved her desperately ... and who joined Missy, Harry, Princess Martha and the rest of the gang in residence at the White House in 1941. (Eleanor's assistant, a woman named Malvina "Tommy" Thompson, every bit as devoted to her as Missy was to the president, also lived upstairs.) To make matters still more complicated, Mrs. Roosevelt had intensely passionate—maternal?—feelings for young Joseph Lash, the student activist who later became her authorized biographer. When FDR learned (from the

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Army counterintelligence corps, which had been tailing Lash as a suspected Communist) that his wife had been sharing hotel rooms with the young man in anticipation of his departure for the war, the president quickly dispatched Lash's unit to the South Pacific. The First Lady kept his photo on her desk at the White House. "I want to be able to look at you all the time," she explained.

Eleanor Roosevelt seems a signal figure in the history of twentieth-century American liberalism, perhaps the Founding Mother of the modern Democratic Party. Goodwin is an uncritical admirer of the First Lady's political activism, but offers a brutal portrait of Mrs. Roosevelt's human failings. Eleanor emerges an entirely familiar character—adumbrated by Dickens in the person of Mrs. Jellyby, the "telescopic reformer" of *Bleak House* who is obsessed with the problems of Africa, while allowing her own children to wander about ill-clothed and unfed. Mrs. Roosevelt, too, was utterly bereft of humor or irony. "Small talk horrified her," Goodwin writes. Sex was "an ordeal to be borne," she admitted to her daughter Anna. Nor, she would confess, did it "come naturally to me to understand little children or enjoy them." Her four sons, who managed eighteen marriages among them, seemed especially remote; none was able to provide the sort of ideological companionship that she found so comforting in Joe Lash.

All her passion appeared to be detoured into a relentless, undisciplined empathy. The world existed to be improved, not enjoyed. Her crowd believed that it was government's essential role to mitigate all social inequities; successful intervention was not only possible, it was a moral imperative. In Mrs. Roosevelt's case, activism was more visceral than ideological: a reflexive reaction to perceived outrage. Her heart was, almost always, in the right place. She argued for the poor; she demanded equal rights for blacks; she opposed the internment of Japanese-Americans; she fought a gallant but losing battle against the anti-Semitic Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long to admit Jewish refugees as war loomed ("Franklin," she said, "you *know* he's a fascist"); she fought for the rights of labor and jawboned industrialists to provide day-care facilities for the women who did the bulk of defense work after the war began. She was a secular humanist who never doubted the righteousness of her causes.

But she became decidedly uncomfortable when saving the world involved something more than social work, as it

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did during the war years. Military matters were not merely a diversion from the real business at hand, but a form of male frivolity: spying her husband and Winston Churchill in the White House map room shortly after Pearl Harbor, she noted, "They looked like two little boys playing soldier. They seemed to be having a wonderful time, too wonderful in fact." She had no sense of the military's need for discipline and uniformity. She was disappointed by Fort Bragg: all the barracks looked alike, all the streets were rectangular blocks. "Curved streets might make the camps more pleasant places," she suggested, predicting the latter-day Democratic Party's utter alienation from the military sensibility.

Indeed, if war had any use at all, it was to further the First Lady's social work project—as her bizarre tenure at the Office of Civil Defense demonstrated. She believed that "all of us—men in the services and women at home—should be drafted and told what to do." Her husband, who evinced a greater faith in the powers of the market, thought it unnecessary for the government to assign workers to defense plants; people would find their own way to such lucrative opportunities. (He was, of course, right.) She also was taken by Walter Reuther's silly idea that government should continue supervising the major industries when peace came, transforming the War Production Board into the Peace Production Board, which would "[administer] the nation's industrial effort for the benefit of the greatest number of citizens." The government, she believed, could rationalize anything.

And she believed it fervently, often boorishly, her faith unrelieved by doubt or skepticism, except about those who didn't share her romantic view of the poor. Certainly, she had no sense of perspective, not even a passing twinge that her overweening empathy might have unintended consequences, or that altruism tends to shrivel when it is institutionalized. She had to be reminded, frequently by her husband, that winning the war was far more important than building public housing.

All of which, of course, is distressingly familiar. Eleanor Roosevelt's fingerprints are all over the modern Democratic Party. Her husband's are less so—and there is a good reason for that. His Democratic Party no longer exists. It was a fleeting phenomenon, a creaky amalgam of ethnics and rednecks, urban political machines and the solid, conservative South—with a sprinkling of liberal intellectuals to make everyone else uncomfortable—brought together by economic cataclysm and social disaster, and held together by a political master. It was a splendid caper, a grand contraption, but it took a magician to keep it aloft.

Race did it in eventually; prosperity, too, but mostly race. The fault lines were clear even as FDR was winning the war. Eleanor's passionate campaign against Jim Crow laws led Alabama Governor Chauncey Sparks to warn, with great prescience, that it would be difficult "to hold the South within its traditional Democratic allegiance in the years to come." The decision to stand in favor of equal rights for blacks—inevitable, after the Roosevelts set the process in motion during World War II—proved a moral triumph and a political catastrophe for the Democratic Party, a catastrophe compounded by the Democrats' insistence that the government could engineer the reversal of 300 years of race-based persecution by imposing race-based remedies.

Bill Clinton's Democrats are far more homogeneous than Franklin Roosevelt's. They are a party organized around principles that very much resemble Eleanor's antic cult of empathy. Freed from the need to please rednecks, they are a party skewed—well beyond the bounds of reason—toward isolationism, industrial policy, the unlimited rights of the afflicted and social science run amok. They are the party of perpetually sensitive professional care-givers—the "helping" professions—and their perpetually aggrieved clients: Eleanor Roosevelt's party.

The promise of Bill Clinton was that he seemed to see the folly in this. He would restore in Democrats a sensitivity to the needs of the *un*afflicted, and build a broader, perhaps even Rooseveltian, coalition. He was a Democrat who talked about "responsibilities" as well as "rights." He said, "No more something for nothing," and he seemed to mean it. But he didn't mean it, really. Clinton's Rooseveltian project was fatally compromised by his own—and his wife's, and his party's—Eleanorean sensibility. The only way to expand the coalition and remain true to modern Democratic values was an audacious expansion of the victim pool. The "forgotten middle class" would now be considered victims, too: the victims of governmental neglect (of all things).

This became clear after the election, when the Clintons insisted upon health care reform, which had been only one of many campaign themes, as the highest priority of their administration—and not just reform, mind you, but "health care that is always there," a new middle-class entitlement that wouldn't cost anything. Something for nothing. Some sort of health insurance reform—indeed, a system of universal coverage—is surely desirable. But the real priority for a Democratic president, if the losing Eleanorean coalition was to be transcended, should have been a matter of demeanor, the restoration of a sense of proportion. It required a subtle, disciplined and precise message: we'll have a heart, but we won't get too crazy about it. It required the calm and the competence—and the authority—that Franklin Roosevelt conveyed effortlessly from his first moments in office.

Roosevelt had the advantage of serving at a time that demanded heroic stature, the very opposite of the cloudy anomie of the Clinton era. That said, the most obvious difference between the two men is a matter of character. For all his evasiveness, Franklin Roosevelt knew what he was about. He did not flail in office; he had no need to "grow" or to "evolve." He had already been tested, mercilessly, by polio. His sense of mission, as he nudged a reluctant nation toward an inevitable war, was unwavering. His leadership was subtle, brilliant, intuitive—one of the great public performances in American history.

He shimmers above Goodwin's domestic soap opera, less accessible than his entirely predictable wife and all the more remarkable for it. He is willfully enigmatic, impassive, elusive, cool; he plays at these. Goodwin's difficulty explaining how Roosevelt chose Henry Wallace as his vice president in 1940 is partly because there was no process. No decisive staff meetings, no polling. The president simply did it. When faced with the problem of trying to get a reluctant Congress to support the wholesale rearming of the British military, the president went off, alone, on a Caribbean cruise, and came home with the brilliant concept of lend-lease: "He did not seem to talk much about the subject at hand,"

Unified Field

Take the walnut. A brain's in there—
hemisphere, fissure, fold—
knows how to make a tree,
given half a toehold;

how to turn Gravity
back on itself—one huge
hole-in-reverse rising
in a ponderous centrifuge

away from the world,
outward, like Light.... Einstein
couldn't crack this nut,
nor Hawking design.

PETER KANE DUFAULT

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Robert Sherwood recalled, "or to consult the advice of others, or to 'read up' on it...." When Henry Stimson, the secretary of war and the high priest of the Eastern foreign policy establishment, questioned Roosevelt's decision—Stimson wanted to put all energy into rebuilding the American military—the president refused to budge. Goodwin has few accounts (indeed, I can't recall even a single account) of the president sitting around agonizing, while various aides debate positions. He heard them out, but did what he thought was right.

He made some terrible mistakes. He turned his back on the Jewish refugees at the moment when Hitler seemed ready to let many of them go; and he imprisoned Japanese-Americans. But, for the most part, he had a finely tuned sense of what the traffic would bear. He knew how far to let Eleanor push him toward empathy. He made it possible for blacks to earn a decent living in the defense industries, and he integrated the military. But he wouldn't support a commission to investigate the possibility of equal rights for blacks: "We must start winning the war ... before we do much general or specific planning for the future."

It was always about winning the war. He was steadfast; he never blinked. He struck a calm, optimistic tone with the public, even in the darkest hours. "His reaction to any event was always to be calm," Eleanor observed after Pearl Harbor. "He just became almost like an iceberg and there was never the slightest emotion allowed to show." He didn't chew out the staff, or demand explanations, when Allied complacency allowed a devastating German counterattack, at the Battle of the Bulge, in late 1944. "In great stress," George Marshall said, "Roosevelt was a strong man." And at other times, too: after a determined effort to keep his paralysis from public view for all his political career, he toured a military hospital in Hawaii and suddenly, according to Sam Rosenman,

> did something that affected all of us very deeply. He asked a Secret Service man to wheel him very slowly through the [amputee] wards.... He insisted on going past each individual bed. He wanted to display himself and his useless legs to those boys who would have to face the same bitterness.

These are impulses that cannot be taught. Roosevelt intuitively held himself aloof, and kept his emotional distance; he didn't give a maudlin or peppy speech at the hospital. He just showed himself. For FDR, empathy was not an ideology; it was an emotional impulse to be tested rigorously before it was indulged. It was part of a great leader's bag of tricks—along with humor, optimism, sternness and a thick hide. It is utterly unfair, of course, to compare Clinton to such a man. But Roosevelt's élan does illuminate rather precisely the nature of Clinton's shortcomings as a leader; the lack of dignity, the prolixity, the uncertainties of mind and heart.

It is a measure of Doris Kearns Goodwin's success that the subtle sources of FDR's greatness become manifest in the course of this book. And it is especially fortuitous, at this sour and confused moment, to be reacquainted with the lonely, purposeful wartime Roosevelt, as opposed to the liberal icon of the 1930s. This Roosevelt didn't experiment, because there was no margin for error. He plunged ahead, risked all and saved the world. In the end, Winston Churchill seems not even vaguely hyperbolic when, after their wartime meeting at Casablanca, he observed: "If anything happened to that man, I couldn't stand it. He is the truest friend; he has the farthest vision; he is the greatest man I have ever known."

JOE KLEIN is a columnist for *Newsweek* and a political analyst for CBS News.

Family Values

BY CHRISTOPHER BENFEY

History: The Home Movie by Craig Raine

(Doubleday, 326 pp., $22)

Fifteen years ago the English poet Craig Raine made a splash with a book called *A Martian Sends a Postcard Home*. The method of the beguiling title poem was simple: How would a visitor describe life on Earth?

> In homes, a haunted apparatus sleeps,
> that snores when you pick it up.
>
> If the ghost cries, they carry it
> to their lips and soothe it to sleep
>
> with sounds. And yet, they wake it up
> deliberately, by tickling with a finger.

The riddling technique that Raine employed was as freshly inventive as the inventions that it described: a telephone, a toilet, a Model-T ("a room with the lock inside—/a key is turned to free the world / for movement"). The poem was also a textbook demonstration of the art of "defamiliarization" or "making strange," which the Russian Formalist critics of the '20s considered the very basis of literature. A horse race from the horse's point of view, a toad's-eye view of a harrow: such ways of rendering the ordinary odd refresh our view of the world while refurbishing our language.

Raine's virtuosity with outlandish similes and metaphors inspired imitation among his contemporaries, and Raine's fellow Oxford poet James Fenton hailed the arrival of the Martian School (itself something of a Martian image). Poetic schools are good marketing ploys, and Raine, who held T. S. Eliot's former job as poetry editor at Faber & Faber from 1981 to 1991, was in a position to publish Martian alums and satellites; he is now back teaching at Oxford.

Raine has always had a cool talent for the big-impact poem. His most conspicuous successes have used an innocent eye to remake the world. Thus the Martian's unexpected interpretations, or the young girl in "Inca," whose untutored perception is compared to the wheelless and letterless—though nonetheless sophisticated—Incas. "Rich," the fine title poem of Raine's next book, took luxury as its subject, another opportunity (for the earthbound, working-class Raine) to spy on the strangeness of another world:

> She owns that thoroughbred
> smouldering under his blanket,
> those binoculars *en croute*
> kept warm by her breasts ...

The sultry richness celebrated here is both the plenty of nature and of language, with Raine as loyal "steward / of her untold wealth, / keeper of the dictionary."

The centerpiece of *Rich*, which appeared in 1984, was a superb prose memoir about Raine's father, the prizefighter Norman Raine, who was also a jack-of-all-trades, spiritualist and faith healer, given to "talking about his Negro spirit-guide, Massa, and explaining how he knew when people were cured

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because he felt burning coals in the palms of his hands." In the muscular prose of "A Silver Plate," Raine eschewed figures of speech; the narrative is lean and quick as a featherweight. "But it's not poetry, Cal," Randall Jarrell complained when he read Robert Lowell's similar, father-obsessed prose insert in *Life Studies*. Raine, for his part, seems to have decided that Martian riddles and similes, so effective for enlivening description, didn't lend themselves to narrative.

He has changed his mind, as his new book—immodestly titled *History*, modestly subtitled *The Home Movie*, subsubtitled "A Novel in Verse"—makes clear. In this gallimaufry of genres, similes and peculiar points of view flourish in rank profusion. The history recounted is the story of two families—the Raines, and the family of the Russian poet and novelist Boris Pasternak—from 1905 to 1984. A disingenuous author's note assures us that "All the characters in this book are fictitious." Well, maybe. But in what sense is Pasternak—or Lenin, or Hitler, or Mandelstam, or Tsvetayeva, all of whom figure here—fictitious? Another smaller note, on the copyright page, more accurately states that names and characters are "used fictitiously." In any case, Raine clearly wants to dissuade us from demanding fidelity to the historical record.

Since Raine's real-life wife is named Ann Pasternak Slater, we can assume that *History: The Home Movie* is a fantasy on the fates of two families, as the outsized events of "History" have touched their home life. The dislocations of twentieth-century Europe—civilians in exile, soldiers abroad and returning home—provide the alienating eyes that Raine thrives on. He takes the liberties claimed by much postmodern fiction to root around in the past and to graft his own memories and inventions onto it, a little in the spirit of Julian Barnes's *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*.

Raine's book is composed of a series of ninety or so vignettes, dated and titled. These are quick takes, fragments for the reader to put together: hence home movies. Fortunately Raine makes no great effort to render the sections of his poem "movielike." He's drawn to home movies (and to postcards, for that matter) because they're intimate, informal affairs: hand-held, offhand, wishing you were there. He writes in an easy-going, unobtrusive prosody (loose iambic trimeter triplets, unrhymed); his line breaks are almost never surprising, falling at the close of phrases, and often coinciding with punctuation. He doesn't want to distract us from the two things that most interest him: his scenes and his similes.

Raine's own family materials inspire, perhaps inevitably, the best poetry. There are memorable passages on his grandfather Henry Raine's return from World War I to his wife Queenie:

> "Home," he whispers to Queenie,
> watching his youngest lurch
> on sturdy statuesque limbs.
>
> He spends the evening
> opening cupboards and drawers,
> finding the ivory napkin rings,
>
> a set of six, like smokers' teeth ....

The stain and stench of history are everywhere: "Tonight he squats to sample / the old sourness / that lives in the sideboard, // and finds the regimental photograph. / She watches while he marks / the faces of the dead."

Norman Raine's boxing career reappears in *History* versified and vibrant. Here he is, boxing for England against Germany in 1937, at the Albert Hall:

> And on the blind side,
> gives Kastner the heel of the glove,
>
> the lethal trellis of laces
> ripped up and down his face
> like a credit-card machine.
>
> Through a gash darkly,
> look at the red on his teeth.
> Bright menstrual blood on porcelain.

A nice joke there, that gash for St. Paul's glass, and while credit cards and menstruation seem a bit out of place, or time, here, they do contribute to the strange (Martian) feel of the scene. Other members of Raine's family—Uncle Eliot the shrink with a taste for porn, Uncle Jimmy the crazed gay painter—are deftly drawn. We get a rich sense of ordinary and extraordinary Englishness across three generations.

The Pasternak vignettes, by contrast, remain somewhat remote, exotic, less home movie than Hollywood versions of aristocratic Russians in exile:

> Pince-nez like the letter g,
> Rosa is seated, upright
> at the upright piano,
>
> letting her fingers rummage
> for a few slow bars
> of Brahms and Schubert
>
> in its open drawer....

The writing is vivid, inventive; there's a nice contrast between the "upright" Rosa and those illicit fingers busy in the piano's "open drawer." Still, we remain outsiders to this human world, so reminiscent of "Rich."

Raine's gentle deflation of the political and erotic chameleon Boris is effec-

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tive, however. We listen to Stalin quizzing Pasternak, torn between competitiveness and compassion, about the poet Mandelstam's worth (that is, worth killing or worth sparing). There are well-staged scenes with Pasternak and Tsvetaeva, Pasternak and Akhmatova. But such passages—based on the memoirs of Mandelstam, Isaiah Berlin and others—contribute little to our understanding of these poets, or the crises in their lives. Raine's jaunty manner keeps running up against intractable material, and the inevitable similes too often ring hollow and cheap: the barbed wire of Bergen-Belsen "like interference, tearing up the postcard view."

Raine is at his best with the Pasternak clan when he's describing, not narrating. A stroll through the Berlin Zoo gives him a chance to put his simile machine on automatic pilot:

> The lowslung leopard
> modelling its expensive coat
> for the length of the cage,
>
> the gorilla focusing
> his nostrils like binoculars
> in their direction,
>
> the Indian elephants
> without their dentures ....

No one can ignite such figural fireworks better than Raine; we are left with the impression that these elegant, out-of-place animals, armed with binoculars and expensive coats (and a leopard's coat is expensive, once he's lost it) mirror the exiled and "captivated" Pasternaks.

Raine's menagerie of similes invites taxonomy. He likes the kind where the two terms (tenor and vehicle, though who can remember which is which?) are related by subject matter (an ambulance horse "like a surgeon masked by its nosebag," a smoker whose nose is "packed ... with hair / like a Meerschaum pipe") or by verbal similarity (rain doing a rain dance, a scrapbook "whose cover shows two dogs, / torn from scraps of paper, / / scrapping"). He ventures a few self-reflexive similes—a cloaked man "like a bat in the sling of itself"—of the kind that Christopher Ricks once boldly ventured were prevalent in times of civil war (Marvell in England, Heaney and Muldoon in Ireland; so, too, the Russian Revolution?).

Some of Raine's similes are so good that he recycles them. I counted at least three instances of "like a ventriloquist's dummy." A frog doing a plié (one of several figures for masturbation) is a close cousin, etymologically, to a frog like a pair of pliers. I enjoyed an umbrella "inside out like a rhubarb leaf," but was unprepared (or too prepared) for a foreskin, five pages later, "crinkled / like the unforced crown / of rhubarb shoots."

Similes in such profusion run the risk of blurring impressions rather than sharpening them. Sometimes there are too many spices in the dish. (A spicy trope: "A toddler's tiny prick / *au poivre* with sand.") Only rarely does the simile advance or broaden Raine's narrative, as in the Berlin Zoo passage, or in this complex example, drawn from a description of the Blitz:

> Pity about the incontinent pipes.
> Shame the fireplace shat itself.
>
> And now the sirens start
> like Munch's woodcut of *Der Schrei*
> (82 degenerate works seized in 1937).

We see the sirens as screaming women (the original sirens *sang*); and we see Hitler's bombing as itself a truly degenerate work, as opposed to Munch's masterpiece.

After we've feasted on Raine's sideboard of similes, what's our impression of the whole of this "novel in verse"? One feels pedantic noting that the book lacks the characterization and the ongoing plot of, say, Vikram Seth's *The Golden Gate*, not to mention Byron's *Don Juan*. After all, the only genre more wide open than the "long poem" is the novel. Where Raine tries hardest to be novelistic, though, he falls into awkwardness. About the least successful novelistic device here is the coy presence of a first-person narrator, rendered usually as a fly: on the wall, in the ointment, in a swarm of fly-related similes and puns. The reader comes to expect some evocation of flies toward the end of each chapter.

And there are a lot of chapters. Raine, who has written widely and well on American poetry, has acquired a dose of gigantism, which is the *maladie américaine* of poets. (As Howard Nemerov wrote, "From epigram to epic is the course / For riders of the American winged horse.") Raine has rummaged in the drawers of the past, and fleshed out his own family secrets in memorable ways. If the larger rhythms of the century have eluded his grasp, he is hardly alone among overreaching poets in that fate. Readers of *History* will remember the similes, along with several chapters—"Garden Square, Oxford," "Back from the Front," "Berlin Am Zoo," "Answer the Telephone"—that stand alone as excellent poems, greater than the sum of *History*'s parts.

CHRISTOPHER BENFEY, who teaches at Mount Holyoke College, is writing a book about New Orleans during Reconstruction.

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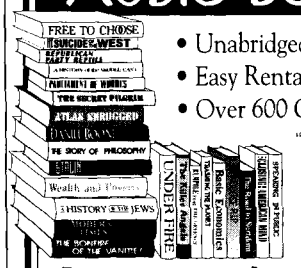

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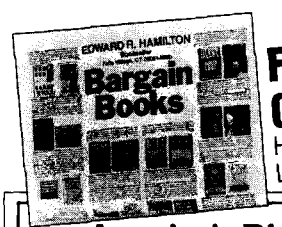

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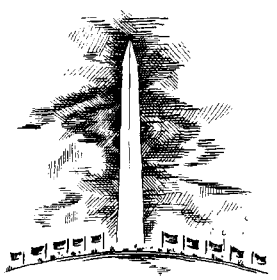
WASHINGTON DIARIST

Relentless

I WAS TAKING SOME BOSTON Chicken pot pie to my friend Patrick the other night (Patrick has AIDS and wasn't feeling too well, whether it was a reaction to the hefty new round of antibiotics he'd been taking or the massive sinus infection he'd been hoping the antibiotics would counter or maybe—who knows?—a new opportunistic infection that was about to play havoc with his 30-year-old body or the old opportunistic infections—pneumocystis and cryptosporidiosis—that he was already taking twenty-seven pills a day to control, we—and his doctors—weren't completely sure) and I came across a publication I'd heard of but never actually read before. It's called *DPN*, short for *Diseased Pariah News*, and for the next couple of days, it more than lifted my mood; it gave me grounds for more hope than I'd yet allowed myself in the years of the plague.

"INSIDE THIS ISSUE: HOW TO TELL if Your Loved One is Dead," teases the cover-line. And the article lives up to its billing. The author, Editor Michael Botkin, has come across a new sensitive guide for caregivers of PWAs (people with AIDS), "written from a 'death-teddy' (i.e., 'let me share the spiritual charge of your death and/or terminal "healing" by hugging you while you slowly expire') perspective." Among the signs in the pamphlet are: "increased sleeping during the day, difficult to arouse," "no breathing," "no heartbeat," "loss of control of bowel and bladder" and "no response to shaking or shouting." Botkin comments: "I have some misgivings about that last item, 'no response to shaking or shouting,' as it conjures up uncomfortable images of the slightly inept caregiver slapping a PWA corpse while yelling 'Yo, dude! Are you alive or what? Yo!' " The author suggests a few additions to the list: "*Raptors Devouring Corpse.* The presence of large scavenger birds (e.g., crows, vultures, bald eagles) nibbling on your ex-lover's body generally indicates death. In the future, when housekeeping for terminal HIVers, avoid leaving unscreened windows open.... *Abrupt Cessation of Sarcasm.* If your caregivee no longer makes nasty comments when you perform Louise Hay-style affirmations over him with your crystal, it may be that he's developed a more 'healing' attitude, or he may just have croaked."

MAYBE YOU HAVE TO HAVE HALF your friends in their 20s and 30s infected or sick or dead to find this hysterically funny, but, anyway, I did. I became a *DPN* bore for a couple of days, hooting with laughter at the latest turn of phrase I uncovered, sharing the jokes with my nonplussed straight colleagues, most of whom winced politely at the parody-ad for AIDS Barbies—"And she thought math class was tough!"—and the calorie-rich recipes for PWAs in the regular feature "Get Fat, Don't Die!" Then, for good measure, there's the fetching "Page Nine Boy" pinup: "Age: 28; Height: 6' 1"; Weight: 172 pounds; CD4 Count: 5; Infections: You name 'em!" Or the trend comparison chart—like the ones they have in desperate *Style* sections—of "New Clones" vs. "AIDS Clones": "New Clone: Easily Bored. AIDS Clone: Tires Easily. New Clone: Bald as a Fashion Statement. AIDS Clone: Bald from Radiation Therapy." Or you can browse the beginning of a piece of generally lively fiction: "I'm on the phone with the clinic. The counselor says, 'Well, you're positive.' Blood rushed up from my gut—my face hot. 'Swing low, sweet char-i-o-ot.' "



GET IT? OH, WELL, TOO BAD. *DPN* is the latest and most fully formed product of a view of the world I first encountered a few years ago when reporting a story on the rifts between HIV-positive and HIV-negative gay men. It reflects the way positives—of all shapes and sizes—often view the virus not as a permanent affliction, or a prelude to dying, but as a herald to a new—and newly intense—way of living. This isn't mere rationalization. I remember particularly a positive friend of mine who a few years ago simply decided not to date negatives anymore. He didn't pretend he was glad he'd sero-converted. It was just that he'd gotten beyond the immediate shock of diagnosis and didn't have the time to deal with sero-negative guilt and misunderstanding and panic.

DPN GOES ONE STEP FURTHER. IT doesn't have the time to deal with sero-*positive* guilt and misunderstanding and panic. For a long time, AIDS discussions were all variants on what might best be called the Schmalz Syndrome, after *The New York Times* reporter Jeffrey Schmalz, who, diagnosed with AIDS, became a crusading journalist on the subject for the paper of record. Schmalz, following an increasingly activist line, saw the issue of AIDS as a mixture of political scandal and personal tragedy: the government was doing nothing (or worse, was guilty of murder, genocide, etc.) and everyone was dying. His posthumous cri de coeur, "Whatever Happened to AIDS?," in *The New York Times Magazine* was a classic of the genre. President Clinton, ever eager to feel rather than think, loved it; the *Times* reveled in another spasm of minority goop (and has subsequently, as if to honor the memory of Schmalz, reported overwhelmingly doom-laden news about the epidemic); and those of us who knew and cared for Jeff, and who found the article, oddly, if understandably, off-key, kept appropriately quiet.

AFTER THE *TIMES*'S sentimentalism, *DPN* is a breath of morbidly brilliant air. The magazine exudes a sense that HIV is a virus, not a government conspiracy; that its cure is a complex scientific problem, which inevitably takes time; and that the main task of people with HIV, in the meantime, is not simply to mope or protest or complain or scream, but to *live*. The magazine is as devoid of self-pity, as crackling with self-possessed energy, as PWAs and other terminally ill people often are. Above all, its tone is true. "How does Aunt Kaposi do it?" asks my favorite columnist (named for the lesions) about her comeback from a nasty bout of cryptosporidium, an intestine-exploding parasite (her tip for dealing with which is keeping a lot of books near the john). In a very un-Schmalzy sentence, she replies: "The answer, my dear pariahs, is the same for each and every one of you. Stigma with style, child. There is no time to hate."

STIGMA WITH STYLE. MAYBE ONly a post-cryptosporidial homosexual could ironize his own death, but the spectacle is inspiring. If the culture of complaint is eventually overturned, if the issue of pain is ever to be wrested intelligently from the pining, wit-free left, it will surely begin with the sardonic voice of Aunt Kaposi, "shake and bake I.V. on the right arm, blood transfusion on the left ... cackling away, putting dementia to good use beneath the gaze of the solemn hospital attendants watching me write on a yellow legal pad to all my beloved pariahs." May it be a long time before she finally rests in peace. And may her beloved pariahs get fatter.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

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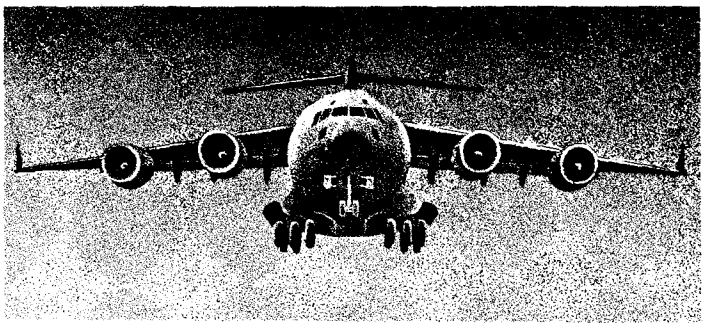

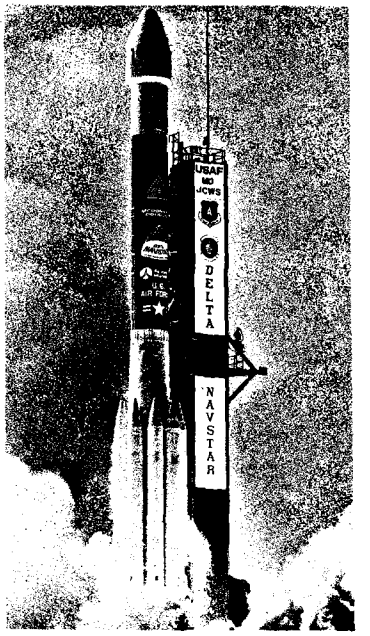

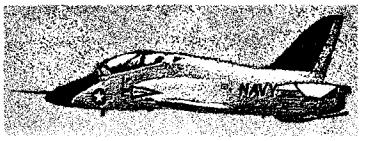

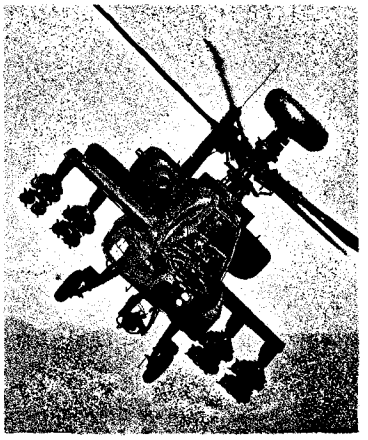

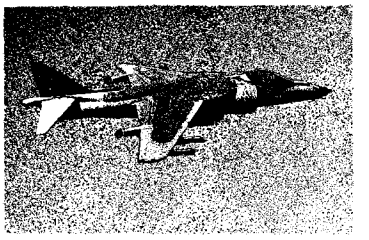

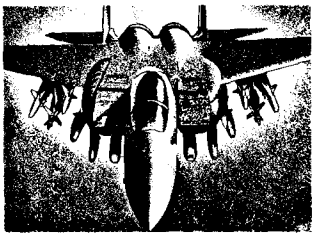

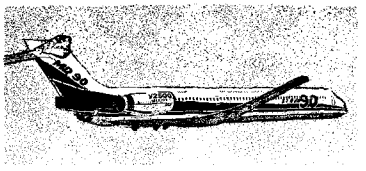

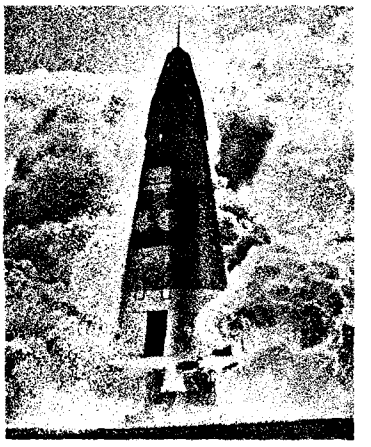

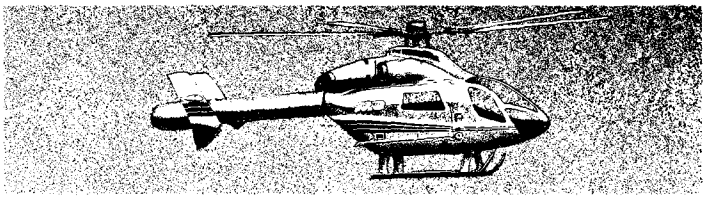

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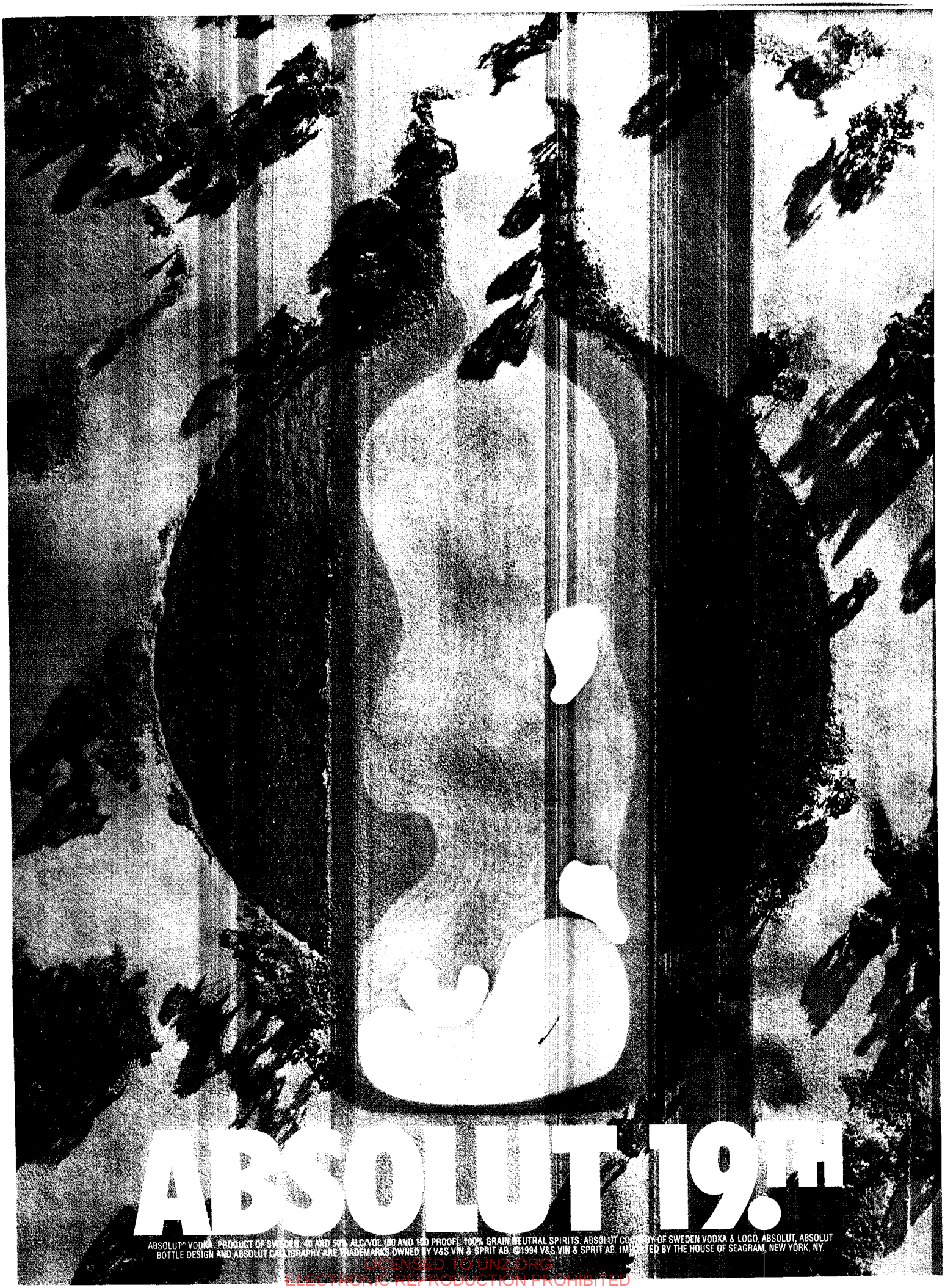

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